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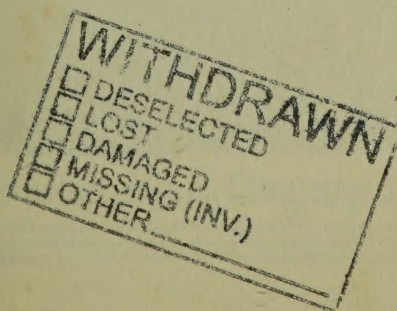
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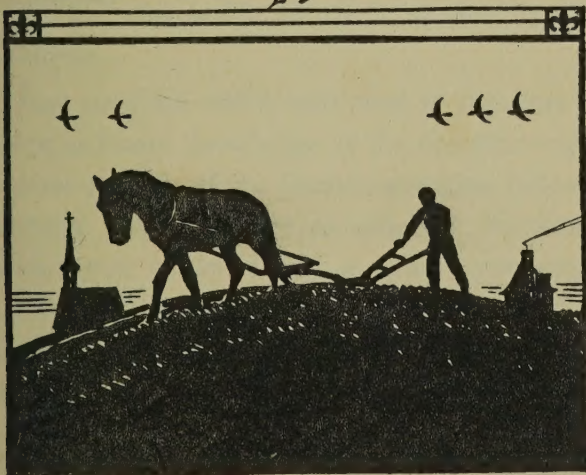
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THE
CHOPPING BEE
and other Laurentian Stories

Thomas G. H. H.



THE
CHOPPING BEE
and other Laurentian Stories
by M·VICTORIN
Translation by James Ferres

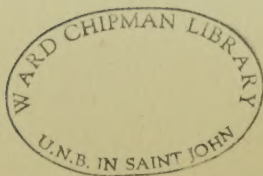


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Translator's Foreword



THE translator deems it a privilege to place before his fellow-Canadians and others, an English version of the series of short stories by M. Victorin.

Any medium which will tend to promote a more intimate knowledge of the literature and mental attitude of our French-speaking fellow-citizens, seems worthy of welcome, because, with better acquaintance, a closer sympathy, a more fully cordial entente is always possible, no matter how friendly may be the relations between the two great sections of our people.

The translator has in some cases found it advisable to deviate from the strict letter of the text, in order to conform his work with the idiom and usage of English. Nevertheless, he hopes that his version will be approved

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as a closely correct rendering, and a sufficiently faithful translation to be of use in schools, and for self-instruction, in connection with the original French.

The author of "The Chopping Bee and Other Stories" was born in the Province of Quebec, and still has his home here. His own heart and mind are an index to the heart and mind of his people, and his works in literature and science, which have gained for him much prestige in his own Province, must assuredly secure for him a large measure of distinction elsewhere.

These stories, as a rule, are based on actual occurrences, with which he had close relation.

In "La Corvée des Hamel," "The Chopping Bee," it was his grand-uncle whose heart was broken by his being obliged to cut down the beautiful ancestral elm.

"Le Rosier de la Vierge," "The Madonna's Rosebush," his grandmother related to him, as a child—the legend of the Madonna's wonderful rosebush.

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In "La Croix de Saint Norbert," "The Wayside Cross," it was his great-grand-father who, as the first pioneer to set foot in the forest near Saint Norbert, erected a Cross on the day of his arrival. Its successor, plain and weather-worn, still stands by the wayside.

"Sur le Renchaussage," "Farming on the Embankment," is his own picture, which he draws as the little boy-farmer of the embankment whose spare time was given to trout-fishing, berry-picking, pranks and picnics.

"Charles Roux," "The Lonely Heart," was his own adventure which brought him into friendship with the pathetically misunderstood Charles Roux.

In "Ne vend's Pas la Terre," "The Old Farm Not For Sale," it was the father of his friend and colleague, who refused the temptation of a large sum of money offered for the homestead which had been in the possession of the family for more than two hundred years.

In "Jacques Maillé," "The Cordwood Donation Bee," it is his own genius which has con-

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ceived, and spread upon enduring canvas for our interest, yes, and for our tears, the affecting story of the "Northern Colonists," with their donation of two hundred loads of fire wood (a fact) to the poor of Montreal.

"Le Colon Levesque," the story of the Pioneer of Temiskaming is one of struggle against difficulties, and of devotion to family and church.

"Peuple Sans Histoire," "A People Without a History" contains an interesting account of the exploit of Madeleine de Verchères, and has frequently been presented on private stages as a dialogue.

The scenes of his stories are laid in that demesne which lies in the happy midway between poverty and riches; in a land throbbing with steady, honest toil and homely joys, and marked by devotion to its Church. These scenes surround his own home and the homes of his relatives, and his readers will surely admit that he views them with the eye of an artist, and describes them with a poet's pen.

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The translator feels that, however imperfect his own work may be, if it serves to bring the attention of lovers of true literature to the little master-pieces produced on our own soil by Professor M. Victorin, it will by no means have been done in vain.

James Ferres.

131 Stanley St.,
Montreal.

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Introduction

Introduction

By ALBERT FERLAND

Author of "Le Canada Chante," "Les Horizons,"
"Le Terroir," etc.



VERY writer makes his own discovery of his own literary bent. One day a young teaching Brother in the College of Saint Jerome received from his Brother Superior an order to leave his books and his pupils for a go-as-you-please in the fields. His health required the open air, mental rest, and a tramp in the sun. Warmly interested in his pupils, he found it hard to give them up for idleness in a country place. What would he find to do in this leisured place in the sun? "No matter what you do," said the Brother Superior, vaguely waving his hands. "Study the birds, the

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stones, the plants ——.” “That’s it, the plants” thought the youth. At any rate, if he had some sort of guide to the wild flowers, such as a Book of Botany, he would not feel lonely with that in his hand, while searching the edge of the road, the clearings, the underbrush. And the easy-going Brother Superior allowed him to annex Provencher, I mean his “Flora,” to aid him in making acquaintance with the plants.

And the young teacher studied the plants to such good purpose, pried with so curious an eye into the garments of the fields, that he became a botanist. He also became the literary exponent of our country-side, the painter of Laurentian life, whom our national Saint Jean Baptiste Society has brought to the front at two of its meetings, and honored with its laurels; the author, in short, who has been so highly praised in our literary reviews for his admirable descriptions of our country-reaches, Brother M. Victorin.

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Nature, towards which he was driven, was as good as a mother to him, bathing him in her pure air and in her sunshine, speaking to him in the voices of the foliage which bordered his path, gliding with her own image into his enquiring eyes, and forever winning his heart.

Without this fortunate ill-health of former days, without this good luck of days of idleness in the open fields, would Brother Victorin ever have thought of botanizing, would he have taken those colors for our literature from that garden of serene and many-colored life? Would he have given us, besides his "Flore de Temiscouata," a book redolent of the life of the soil, these Laurentian stories?

In recognition of the many gifts which he has received from his Motherland, Brother Victorin owed it to himself to extol her name in a beautiful book, and in it he has praised

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her in a note of melting tenderness, and in words, which, as it seems to us, have never until now been heard.

We have seen from the writers of Canada, more than one glimpse of different corners of the country, but here is a wider view of French Canada, here the Laurentians themselves are called forth, in a language vivid with their colors and their poetry. The author initiates us into that full sweep where dreams his noble Saint Lawrence. He brings up for our admiration the heavy lines of the mountains whose blue portico leads to the pallor of the North. It is Buies himself who reappears before our stretches of country and brings back with sharper vision, with other shades, the immense tapestry of the Laurentides.

Along with the physical points of the country, there are here its moral features, caught in the drama of those simple souls, traditionally grouped around the village church. Here

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we find Canadian intimacy, amid the clean aspect of the white dwellings which make a rosary along the King's highway. Here we find the true action of our people on the toilsome glebe, their gaiety, their sadness, shown sometimes in the utterance of the words of some old song, brought long ago from that Old Country, of which they are always thinking. It is the dream of a simple people wedded to their marvellous river, beside which their beloved steeples pierce the sky.

In his stories our author has gathered all the temperament of our borders. He affectionately clothes with a new expression the local visage, the very soul, of his country. The grand voices of the soil ring through his pages, heart-stirring, and one is taken with their special charm, which establishes them as Laurentian, and one is surprised at the enchantment of his simple art, based upon the observation of homely realities, and certainly revealing the temperament of a true artist.

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One naturally seeks the fountain from which the author has drawn so fresh a poetry.

In my opinion, it is to his childhood that Brother Victorin owes his best inspiration. He bends, Faguet would say, "over the spring which reflects his image, and which is his heart." He indicates this to us himself. Memory, like a finger, has turned the older pages of the book of his life, and he, a dreamer, finds himself once more on the road traversed long ago with his old Uncle Jean, the road from which his childish faith saluted the humble wooden cross of Saint Norbert. Stirred with homesickness for the dear countryside where his soul still dwells, he yields to the dream of living over again the joys and sorrows of his childhood, and, filled with this artless poetry, he is moved to transfer it to his writing.

There is something else, to which the beauty of exterior things testifies, and which bears

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all the color of the surroundings of his birth. Nature, observed during his tender years, has now enacted that he shall come to contemplate her at a riper age. And through the network of his travels, with rare sharpness of vision, he returns to her, and whether she appears as forest or river, flower or pebble, smiling as at Chambly, spacious as at the Gulf, terrible, as at the Saguenay, blue with waters and tufted with trees, as at Temiskaming, he loves her always, and nothing thrills his thought more than unravelling the mystery of an untrodden trail. Oh! the grandeur of Nature in Canada, how beautiful she is in her lines of sweetness and of overwhelming majesty! These skies which surround us with such deep twilights, this robe of green waters of such marvellous fullness, which the great river bears down from the Great Lakes to the Labrador, and this skyline of the North, looming huge above its dark waters—vast and impressive country!

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He is filled with awe. And he is astonished that a great land, which offers such rich material for art, should have brought forth so little in painting and in poetry. We have neglected to give a voice to these vast horizons. A treasure of beauty is waiting to be moulded into value, and we have not thought of giving our literature the advantage of it.

If we only knew how to look upon our Canada! The humblest quarter, if a dreamer but visit it, may become an inspiration for poetry.

Brother Victorin, who would like to have a Mistral on every road of the country, brings to every landscape his ardor as a botanist, and, from April to the month of the golden-rod, he observes the flowers weaving a most lovely dress for his Laurentia. With his eyes steeped in their varied colors, he deplores the silence of poets, who neglect to lend their native flora new rhymes, those poets who make the mistake of handing us, usually

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an exotic. And, since those patient dreamers on the asphalt streets persist in abstaining from the joys of the open field, the dreams of the forest, well, verily, Brother Victorin is going to seize these jewels of the countryside to deck his prose.

Throughout his work we find a cheerful greeting addressed to the hawthorn, the rushes, the waterlily, the selaginella, the golden-rod, and other names pleasing to the ear; this ardent culler sets them in his descriptive pages to introduce us to those beauties of his country, which seem so little known. To draw out of Nature the material for art, we must, above all, learn to observe; that is the education of the eye; we must also observe through the medium of our own temperament to lend to it, and have it retain within itself our own individuality of thought; thus is aesthetic reverie expressed in literary style. Every descriptive artist, whether writer or

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painter, is bound to this double education of the eye and of the thought. This essential of art seems to have been early acquired by Brother Victorin. His manner of treating the beautiful features of his country are proof of his power of subtle observation. We feel in reading him, that he has the key to the landscape, the sense of perspective. A seeker in the inviolate forest for Laurentian themes, he culls his subjects everywhere amongst the people of the great river. At one time, it is on the Chambly Road, that a proud Canadian of strong character, the venerable Felix Delage, steadfast as the oak growing before his door, offers the moving spectacle of his simple dream of identification with his native soil, and displays that firmness of heart which no money can succeed in uprooting from his ancestral fields. And again, it is under the Quebec sky, beyond the Saules hamlet. It is the story of the gigantic elm, cut down, after three centuries of veneration for its strength, by the

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very axes of those old men who loved it, and who wept over its dead trunk. Then, further away, in Ancienne Lorette, another charming legend; the mystic territory of the soul of the Hurons and the wonderful rosebush, the delightful Rosebush of the Madonna.

Poetry, for him who holds it in his soul, is found on every roadway, and Brother Victorin, himself, goes to seek it even amongst the stumps of the Colonization country, up in that North, rich in lakes and bristling with mountains, where the peaceful determination of the makers of land branches out, with the rail, the axe, and the steeple. And the humblest, the most retired lives disclose to him, under their apparent insignificance, the human element which contains something most noble and affecting. Of the French-Canadian soul, in its sturdy faith, given to unmarked heroism, to devotion without display, he discloses a touching incarnation in the Colonist Levesque,

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isolated with his family on the primeval, virgin soil, in the lone and gloomy clearing of Temiskaming. There, amidst skeletons of trees whose blackened limbs cut the skyline, he is able to acclaim human nobility; a secret and unacknowledged grandeur of soul, in a backwoodsman who is worthy the aureole of a saint.

His literary subjects he also brings from the North River, and in his harvest of the picturesque he brings from Saint Jerome, O Canadian mother, thy tears of resignation; and thy venerable bruised heart, O mourning Colonist of the North! Student and decipherer of wild life, Brother Victorin is equally so of human life, of those obscure lives in the villages, and, to study these, he takes the road to their houses, he seats himself at the hearths of our people, sits as a listener, seizes the local tone, the strong images of the farm, and gains from the lips of its people the soul of the country.

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And rich in his special knowledge of the country, in the picturesqueness of its solitudes, rich in the poetry of souls to which he has listened, he knows his wealth, he knows he has a hold on the fibre of his race, he can therefore speak of it with words of truth and pride.

Since childhood, the French-Canadian spirit, and its local color, have been, as we have seen, sources of inspiration for Brother Victorin. There is its history besides. And history opens a wide domain of favorite themes. Our ancestors, who sleep in the past, rise up from their ashes, and speak to him. He takes pleasure in listening to this distant voice. His mind turns towards the great river, the royal approach, as he terms it, to the heart of a great country. He hearkens to the hidden history of its shores, which sing their plaint to him, and it is the persistent cry of a people who have the will to survive, that soft, sweet song which its life raises under this

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vast sky, and which rises towards him as one of the finest cantos of the poem of humanity.

And while his thought swings between the silence of the real dawn, and the cry of a dawn that is dead, while the veil of mist lies upon the waters, the floating docks, the masts and the lofty prows, this is how the voice of history is called forth in his spirit:

“It was a virgin cape, was Stadacona, three hundred years ago. France appeared with her Cross and her Lilies upon the Indian stream, and gave it three cities. Then the Mother of this new France abandoned her child to the hostilities of savage America. Quebec, nevertheless, has piously nursed the germ of nationality. She has cherished it, notwithstanding the pain which bruises her heart and floods her eyes, since the day when her Mother, gathering up her beautiful sails, her noble chivalry, her famous sword, left her to survive alone on her cape, with no more than

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a few steeples, and the sweetness of her speech. Thereafter, homesick for France, and turning towards the Gulf with the longings of her old people, she weeps on her lofty headland. However, she knows how to suffer, and, under the folds of another flag, she guards the imprints of France upon her soil. And without any failure of heart, the seventy thousand colonists abandoned in those primitive townships, have willed not to let the thought of France perish. Abide, proud instinct, law of our blood! Abide, so that there may dwell on these shores an enduring impress of the civilizing spirit of the country of our origin, beautiful France!"

They have willed not to perish! And Professor Victorin (as he is now called, being Head of the Botanical Department of the University of Montreal) awakened in his vision by the song of the steeples, is watching the race which has willed not to perish, going about its work. "Ah! race of Quebec," he thinks,

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"I love thee for having borne so much in thy few acres of snow! I love thee, and I will say so in a book addressed to thy image, to the image of thy Laurentia, and so that it may resemble thee; I will take the words of thy sons, the songs of thy daughters; it is thine own, whom I shall make to speak therein. And I will tell of thy dream which broods over thy river, I will tell of the deeps of thy patient soul, the miracle which so astonished Barres I will tell, for I love thee, O thou, who hast the will not to perish!"

Victorin appears especially as discoverer when his thought soars to new heights in science, as in his books on Botany, and from that serene elevation he gains a wider and more compelling view of native realities. The Canadian land, viewed through the clear vision of the scientist, has fewer marks which are without a name, and unveils the direction of its geological lines. Its antiquity speaks to him through the newness of

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the present, speaks to him on the fossilized shores of the lakes, and in the erosion of the cliffs congealed on the dark Saguenay. It displays to his eyes the vicissitudes of past aeons. Its phytonomy, thus regarded, is a tragic book, where he can read the quieted conflict of primitive forces. Versed in the causes of the lines on her rugged forehead, he understands the desert of the Labrador, and the immovable North stirs again for him with a vision of the disruptions of the world, and of its gradual shaping under the glacial masses.

So our territory is something more than the piece of land ennobled by human labor, the field to which is attached the hope of the sower, and where the soul of our ancestors survives. The territory is more than that in his retrospective thought.

Centuries ago, it was the resting place of the nomadic wigwam, it has mingled in equal oblivion vanished flora and the bones of red warriors. Its fertility, which yields our bread,

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is born of the death of forests. And when ghosts of long dead spruce, birch, pine, tamarac and elms come back to deplore lost centuries on the stripped horizon, he thinks of the ruins which earth has held before becoming the cradle of the new people whose thought he has made vocal.

Thus Professor Victorin has already done service with his mentality to his country, unique in the world, as Crémazie has sung, but remaining as yet only too little known. In the contemplation of his own people, he has drawn his shading from the pale skies of the North, those rough horizons in which is set the life of the pioneer, from the steeples of which we are so proud, and which watch over the peaceful villages like slender sentinels of our Latin faith.

And in defiance of those who disparage our native literature, of those who jeer at the desire to find in our poets the reflection of our own country, he is not afraid to raise a new paean

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to his native land. His faith walks in confidence upon our own highways, and deals with our soil and our dwellings. He listens to the song, the speech, the prayer of the heart of our country, to draw from its words, its laughter and its tears the plot of his books. By sympathetic attention, he is at close range with his people, and in their familiar actions he notes their sufferings and their loves. He is the discreet observer whose joy is to draw the latent poems of Canadian life out of the shadows of obscurity.

He sees a literary future for us in the mere understanding of the hidden epic which Providence has given us as a subject in this British North America where the dark forests abound, and where virgin wildness raises its voice in eternal Niagaras. Canadian inspiration is waiting to be drawn upon by a poet of faithful and simple heart, even in her melancholy solitudes. Beside the wavelapped shores of the river, deep in the woods, and on the borders

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of the wild forest Professor Victorin has found her rich in human rythms and filled with the murmur of inanimate things. And his proud gesture is a discreet invitation to timid ones to go and drink from the clear springs of Canada, to hunt for new forms in Laurentia, to extract from their rural reveries, from their dreams in forest or city, a virgin poetry of interpretation, set to a new chant.

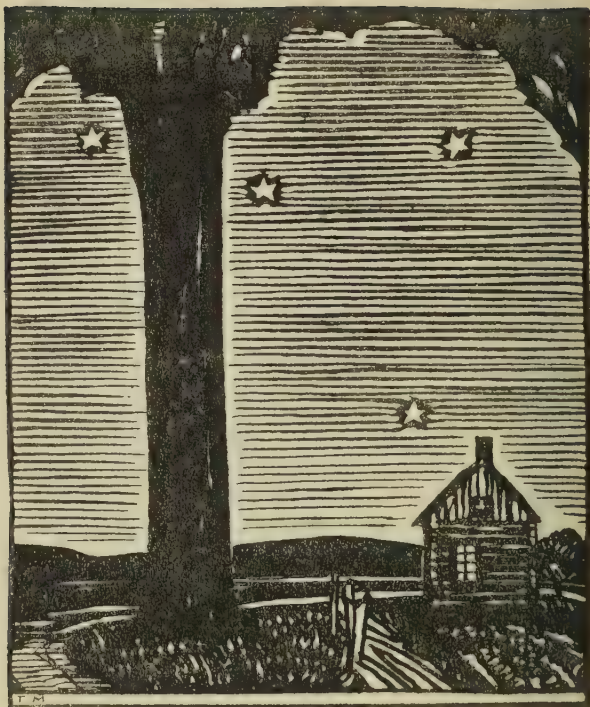
To the young, who are sensitive and eager to understand, these Laurentian Stories bring a fresh revelation. An art nourished on strong images, and on impressive realities is now to offer youth a picture of unsuspected landscapes which the bold and useful stride of the pioneer is humanizing, far from the noisy towns. For youth it is a new contact with the soul of the land, brought about by ringing words. It will be animated with the breath of the Motherland, and stirred into a keener sensibility. In its memory will be stamped thy image, O Canada. Becoming acquainted

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with thy wide horizons, with the hymn of the Saint Lawrence, youth will also go forth to salute thee with its eyes and with its dream.

Verily, in these few simple but exquisite stories, Canada has placed new flowers on her breast, has twined the maple leaf in her hair, and proud of her finery, the pretty one has gone to look at herself in the St. Lawrence!

The Chopping Bee



" . . . the gigantic elm . . . many times a centenarian, older than history, as solidly established in legend as in the ground.

The Chopping Bee



THE road leaving Quebec which winds between hawthorn hedges towards Petite Rivière and Ancienne Lorette, crosses a country as old as the French pioneer's axe in America.

It has kept from the beginning, an air of rustic nobility, with vast historic farms, where riches are hereditary and constant, and it has quiet hamlets at the crossroads, which retain deliciously endearing old French names.

Near at hand, the River Saint Charles, bordered with choke-cherries, alders and white asters, rolls languidly with little bubbles over its smooth stones. Two roads, North and South, span it by turns, and with a single arch, on charming little old-fashioned bridges. Through the foliage, one guesses at, rather than sees, secluded houses and ancient mills built under the French regime. Here is the Saules hamlet, where crossroads meet near

THE CHOPPING BEE

the river, and where loads of hay, coming down from de L'Ormière, pass in slow procession all day long, in front of the smithy.

Turn to the left, and take the road towards Ancienne Lorette. The landscape opens out. On one side, the Saint Foy Church nestles at the side of a hill, and, towards the North, on the first slopes of the Laurentides, like silver jewels on a green casket, the steeples of the two Lorettes glitter amid the rising sweep of innumerable trees.

The road leads straight along between two old willows, and large houses half hidden behind a neat lawn and a hawthorn hedge. Stay! a hundred paces to the right is the Hamel homestead. That is what they call it here. It is small and bare, decaying boards, nailed across, close up the door and windows. There are no trees near it. Stiff weeds, mistresses of the avenue, hide the wheeltracks. Wild sorrel and goldenrod have overrun the garden before the door, some old rosebushes, only, bristling with thorns and recalling the former cultivation, still flourish beside the worm-eaten bridge over the ditch and the broken-down gate. But there is a colossal stump

THE CHOPPING BEE

there, which forcibly attracts attention, standing out amid the lush vegetation which climbs over it, and from which, like black snakes, enormous roots spread, creeping over the declivity, crossing the ditch and disappearing under the macadam of the road.

That, alas! is all that remains of the Hamel elmtree.

The last occupant of this house was the late Simeon Hamel, my granduncle, whom I used to know well. Death had bereaved him of all his children, and he lived alone on the property with his wife Marie, a dear old lady with a fine little wrinkled face, who never made any objection when we went picking cherries from her trees.

What a family, my friends, were these Hamels! At my Grandmother's there was an extraordinary photograph, and we children, when taken to Lorette for supper on Sunday, used to spend long minutes, silently, and with finger in mouth, looking at these nineteen brothers and sisters in the frame, the former with beards and the latter wearing linen caps, and the youngest of them, my late granduncle, was then over fifty years old!

THE CHOPPING BEE

And that is where they were all born, in that little grey house, which had only the door and two windows in front, and around which ran a good banking of earth, held in place by cedar timbers. The farm sloped gently towards Saint Foy, down into "La Suete," a beautiful farm, upon my word, and even yet, after three centuries of cultivation, fertile enough to support this formidable brood.

The Hamel property was known through ten parishes roundabout, because of the gigantic elm growing beside the road, an elm many times a centenarian, older than history, as solidly established in legend as in the ground. It was well-grown when the white man first appeared on the banks of the Saint Lawrence, and the Indians used to say that a powerful manitou made it his home. For a hundred and fifty years it had seen the gallant soldiers of France pass by on the King's Road, which dustily wound past its foot, and there is a legend that the Marquis of Montcalm more than once let his valiant grenadiers rest under its shade. Some thirty years ago, two other trees very like it were still to be seen from my granduncle's verandah, one on the heights of

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St. Foy, the other towards Indian Lorette, and my grandmother used often to tell me a curious thing while I was holding her skein of wool, which was that those two elms also belonged to Hamels, but who were not related either to each other or to us.

Uncle Simeon's elmtree was, at a man's height, thirty-six feet in circumference. Yes, thirty-six feet, by actual measurement with a cord! On Sundays, when we used to go to my grandfather's, at a point some acres distant, we would cut across the oat-field, to come and try to encircle the crown giant with our little arms. I think today of the delightful scene which that used to make, of those ardent ephemeral butterflies which children are, of the shrieks of laughter which went mingling towards the top, and harmonized with the twittering of the birds on the edges of innumerable nests!

Oh! the Hamel elmtree! Uncle Simeon might be working far on the other side of the road without leaving its shade, often, too, the plowshare would stick, and the team stop short, the plow had just struck a root! Simeon would then look proudly for a moment at the

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superb tree, then passing the reins round his neck and adjusting his pipe between his teeth, would pull hard at the handles, drive the horses on and continue the furrow he had begun.

The Hamel elmtree! I have seen it many times and under every light. I have seen it when the Spring was just beginning to weave the fragile gauze of the green leaves, without yet disguising the powerful sinews of the great branches. I have seen it in the early hours, responsive to the first kiss of the sun, greet with a deep murmur the fine morning breeze. But above all, it was in the evening when we were going back towards Quebec, that it was beautiful. I could then find no words, but the images are there, most clearly, in my memory. The horizontal light was re-touching its noble crown, and glossing with burnished gold the immense canopy so royally outlined against the paling sky. Then, with the further decline of the sun, the greens were shaded, dark spaces deepened in the luminous mass, and, little by little, while the shadows climbed up behind it, the charm slowly melted away! Towards the time when our waggon

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slowly passed over the Radeau bridge, the Hamel elm was swallowed up in the great darkness.

There came an evening when Simeon, seated after supper at the edge of the embankment surrounding the foundations of his house, was silently smoking his pipe, and watching the purple mist rising from the foot of "La Suede." He saw his neighbor Charles Paradis open the gate and come up the lane.

"Good evening, Charles."

"Good evening, Simeon! Work going along all right?"

"Yes. My two large fields are done. Tomorrow I am doing the black loam."

Silence fell between the two men. Charles was in his forties, stooped slightly, turning grey. He was standing smoking, with his hands passed through his leather braces. "Simeon," said Charles at last, "I have something to say to you. You know your elm is old and rotten, the last storm threw a big limb on my shed again!"

"You want to put me to costs?" said Simeon, shaking out the ashes from his pipe.

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"No, Simeon, it is not for money, but the branch just missed killing one of my young ones. Some fine day that tree will fall down on our heads!"

"It is still sound! It is old, all right! A tree sheds its branches just as we shed our hair. We don't die of that! We shall both be under ground before that tree falls!"

Charles shook his head.

"Listen, Simeon, they were talking about it on the steps of the Church on Sunday, and in the Little River concession, everyone thinks as I do, you must cut it down before something happens."

"Cut it down! ! !"

With these words the old man had put away his pipe, and sat there, dumb, his eyes staring at the vision of this proposition, of which he had never dreamed.

"Yes," continued Charles, "you must decide. I have seen a lawyer, you can be forced to do it. But we are good neighbors, aren't we? And then—"

Frightened at having said so much about it, Charles Paradis turned on his heel and went hurriedly home, while Simeon, rooted to the

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ground, his feet in the long grass, gazed on his tree, whose rustling branches were darkening little by little in the gathering gloom.

All that night, he could not sleep. Marie, as you may think, had heard everything, and the next day in that childless dwelling it was like the menace of death hovering over an only son. Simeon donned his Sunday clothes, harnessed his grey to the best waggon, and went down at a slow trot towards Quebec. When he came back about two in the afternoon, Marie could read the death-sentence of the old tree on Simeon's face. She brought out from the drawer what was needed for writing, shook up the bottle of Antoine ink yellowing with age, and in a few labored lines, written with trembling hand, informed the Hamels, the older ones, of the sad news, and invited them to come to a "Bee" after the sowing.

* * *

That morning, the sun rose uncommonly bright. The rain of the evening before had washed the sky, and given a clear voice to the little runnels leading into the ditch. The dew was sparkling on the red petals of the peonies,

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and a thrilling odour coming from the hawthorn hedges was floating in the freshened air. Jean Hamel from l'Ormière, with axe on shoulder and followed by his dog, was seen arriving on foot at seven o'clock. Then a little two-wheeled cart rattled the crossing of the ditch; it was Louis Hamel, from Grand Deserts, with his wife. As was expected, Julie, the widow, came from Quebec by omnibus. About nine, Charles Hamel, for thirty years sexton of les Ecureuils, got down from his Curé's buggy. And one after another all the other Hamels, men and women, all elderly people with grey hair, appeared before the roadside gate.

It was known that he would come, but all the old people were visibly affected, when Joson, the eldest of the family, ninety-seven years of age and half paralysed, came into the old house held under the arms by two of his great-grand-children.

At this moment the Angelus flooded the country, passing over the spruce in the little wood, and reaching the Hamel homestead. Through this brilliant noon of spring, the glad

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voice of the Christian bells floated across the fields, blessing the seed in the ground, the new fruit on the branch. It filled the farm-houses through the open doors and windows and blessed the families saying grace before the steaming souptureen. For all the old Hamels, alas! it was sounding only a knell! They were thinking of the old tree, which had heard the first Angelus pealing over there for the poor fugitive Hurons, and which in its turn was going to lie down in death.

The dinner was plain and sad. The conversation of these old folk was of the past, and the past is peopled with vanished phantoms, burials and broken hopes.

About two o'clock, the men, having given each other a reminding look, took off their coats and went to the grindstone to sharpen their axes. Out on the road, the neighbors and villagers were talking in little groups: bare-footed children ran to and fro, a blade of grass in their mouths, making switches of dog-berry whistle through the air.

At last, Simeon Hamel, holding his axe near the head, came out of the shed and walked down the path. His brothers, some of them

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also armed with axes, followed him. Joson, sunk in a little armchair and weeping into his trembling white beard, stayed on the porch among the silent old women. There was something strange in this group of old peasants all of the same blood, and with faces furrowed by age, going to cut down the tree which had seen all the Hamels being born, and seen all their ancestors die, even those who are spoken of no more, but whose names are to be read on the first page of the Ancienne Lorette register. At that moment, they were all thinking of the cradles over which the elm had watched during the very hot days, of the happy waggonloads which it had seen trotting gaily forth on the wedding-mornings, and of the many coffins which had slowly passed under its shade before being lowered into the earth.

It had been decided to make the giant fall across the road, because it leant a little to that side, and there were no buildings in that direction. Simeon made the sign of the cross, which all the others repeated, and then gave the first stroke into the bark. Without delay, John's axe rose, swung, and fell at an angle,

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making a large black chip fly into the air. Repeated blows re-echoed from the old house, and it seemed to the Hamels that the house also suffered in its soul, that it was groaning, and that soon, when the tree fell, the house too would crumble to the earth! The sweat streamed on the wrinkled foreheads of the two men, and the trunk was hardly scratched. Two other Hamels came as a relay, and the sorrowful work went on with new vigour. The white chips, dripping with sap, were now scattered everywhere, on the road, the grass, and the peonies of the poor garden. The tree was bleeding at its foot, but its heart held good, and its head, rejoicing in the fresh breeze, was still singing its immemorial cradlesong for the birds which peopled its nests. These were fluttering still, unconscious of the death which was hovering so near, over those little sky-blue eggs. . . .

Two other axes.

About four o'clock, at the moment when a white cloud edged with gold was passing over the sun, silencing the twittering in the top of the elm, a dull crackling was heard. The circle of the curious became precipitately

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larger. At the foot, Simeon had seized the axe, and was nervously dealing the last blows. The immense mass of verdure up in the sky, was bending over, slowly at first, but the fall quickened, and that which the storms of centuries had not shaken, crashed down upon the road and the adjoining field, falling with the noise of a tempest caused by the wreck of the branches, the rustling of a million leaves, the cries of the birds and the fluttering of wings.

Then came that moment of stupor and hush which the sight of fallen grandeur always brings; afterwards they set to work to clear the roadway. The services of neighbors were accepted. The Hamels spread out among the branches, and the work of death was stubbornly continued. In proportion as the lopping continued, the dead body of the tree became unsightly: stripped of their leaves, the amputated limbs stood out with a gesture of deep menace, against the darkening sky.

Evening came, and they went in to supper. Marie lighted the lamp, and as the road must not remain blocked for the morrow, market-day, the men took lanterns and returned to the work. During the night, which came up

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without a moon and silenced everything else, the crash of the axes, the rasping noise of the cross cut saws attacking the trunk, the jerking steps of the horses dragging the enormous billets with the chain, the little flashes moving about in the tree, this fury and hate against a thing fallen and dead, all this had the seeming of a crime.

A month later, the Curé of Ancienne Lorette commended the soul of Simeon Hamel, departed this life at the age of seventy years, to the prayers of the congregation. Marie followed him very soon. Now they both sleep beside their ancestors, in the shadow of the Church beside the bend of the river. Truly, man and tree had their common roots in the Hamel homestead!

The lowly, who live close to the land, and who do no writing, return to it unreservedly. The little which remains of them, clings to the house which they have built, to the things they have touched, to the furrows which have yielded them their bread, to the trees which have afforded them shade. But the disappearance of the elm has even deepened the oblivion of the Hamels of long ago.

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Nevertheless, when the market gardeners pass by, wrapped up in their grey overcoats in the early morning on market-days, they point out to their children, with their whipstocks, all that remains of the Hamel elmtree.

The Madonna's Rosebush



"This church soon became a much frequented shrine for pilgrims."

The Madonna's Rosebush



GRANDMOTHER, is that rosebush growing on the Church wall very old? "Yes, children, it is older than I am. I am seventy-five, and I have always seen it there, just under the steeple, beside the niche."

"But who was it that went and planted it so high up?"

"Nobody knows."

"But why," asked one of the youngest, "why didn't the Curé have it pulled down?"

"That, my dear children, that is a story! I heard it told by my grandfather, Jacques Hamel!"

"Oh! Grandma, tell us the story about the rosebush!"

Without waiting for an answer, all of us, little girls in pinafores and braided hair, little untidy boys, dusty and damp from play, we

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all grouped ourselves on the five steps which led to the garden, delicately perfumed as it was that evening by the sweet scent of the lilies of the valley and the plumtrees in blossom. And grandmother, having first gone to get her knitting, told us the story of the rosebush.

I will set it down just as it was told to me.

You must first know that if Ancienne Lorette is today entirely French, and the most peaceful of villages, it has not always been like this. The poor remnant of the Huron Nation, driven from the shores of the fresh-water Sea by the fierce Iroquois, came for refuge first to the western point of the Island of Orleans. Pursued even in this retreat by the persistent hatred of their enemies, they were then placed under the immediate protection of the French guns, quite near the gates of Quebec, and later, at Saint Foy. But it seemed to be the luck of the tribe, not to find any place where they could set up their birch-bark wigwams, and soon, led by their sainted Missionary, Father Chaumonot, the Hurons went over into the Seignory of Saint Gabriel. This seignory was owned by the

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Jesuits, and is no other than Ancienne Lorette. It is situated about nine miles from Quebec.

Father Chaumonot had a great respect for the celebrated Italian sanctuary, and built his first chapel here on the plan of Santa Casa, so the borough was first called Nouvelle Lorette. This chapel soon became a much frequented shrine for pilgrims. Count de Frontenac used to go there to pay his devotions. A statue of the Madonna had been sent from Italy by Father Poncet to Father Chaumonot about 1674, and one day the Angel of Ville Marie, Margaret Bourgeoys, was seen doing homage at its feet.

Historians assert that the celebrated Madonna has not left Saint Foy, or that the authentic statue is the one which is today venerated at Jeune-Lorette; and they say a lot of other things besides. But historians are tiresome people who don't know anything about really nice stories. I tell them they can go and see the Madonna of the Hurons in the corner of the splendid church at Ancienne Lorette, where she is today enshrined.

This wooden statue, which is rather a large one, is not at all like the Madonnas which fol-

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low the present day taste. The hair escapes in close curls from a sort of Egyptian fillet which binds the head; the drapery of the robe and cloak is intricate, in a fresh and charming style. The Madonna, with head slightly inclined forwards, seems to be speaking, her left hand is lowered towards the ground, while the right, with two fingers uplifted, is pointing to heaven. The peculiar outline of this figure seems to have been cut by the Italian artist on purpose to please the squaws who used formerly to come in the early morning, wrapped in their many-colored blankets, to sit at the feet of the Madonna.

Then in 1697, the Hurons, having as usual with them, used up the land and the trees, made up their minds to go away again, to carry their household gods over to the jagged, resounding banks of the Cabir-Coubat, at the point since then called Jeune Lorette to distinguish it from the other, which became from that fact, Ancienne Lorette. The Indians did not fail to take away everything they were able to take from their chapel, ornaments, altar, bell, hinges and locks. They also carried away, so tradition and my grandmother say,

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their dear statue of Our Lady. But, Oh! what a surprise! in the morning of the next day, she had resumed her place in the despoiled chapel! Imagine the joy of the French remaining in the village, and the amazement of the Hurons! These suspect a fraud, and return in a hurry to get back their treasure. But the miracle is repeated! At dawn on the following day, a few of the faithful at Ancienne Lorette, assembled for the Mass, find the Madonna again on her pedestal. The experience is again renewed, always the same result. At last tired of the struggle, they let the Madonna's will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

And that is why they built a fine niche over the door for the faithful Madonna, when the new stone church came to replace the humble Huron chapel in 1838. In the course of time, a wild rosebush appeared at the base of the niche. It grew up; it grew old. It was still there at the demolition of the building. How did it creep up there? Did the wind which sweeps the gravelly slopes of the valley of the little river, swirl into the wall just one little seed of sweet-briar? Did some bird, a

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swallow, a warbler or a jay, bring a seed in his little beak in tribute to the Queen of Heaven, who gives its plumage to the sparrow? Well, why not? Do we know what goes on under the crests of the little songsters of the Most High?

But don't be in a hurry! I am coming to my grandmother's story.

It was on a beautiful Sunday at the end of July, the feast of Good Saint Anne—how long ago! that the men gathered at the doorsteps before Mass noticed a little green twig at the foot of the niche, trembling in the breeze, and scraping gently against the edge of the stone.

The beadle, climbing up the steps, pointed it out to the three churchwardens, Jean Hamel, Nicholas Bonhomme and Jacques Voyer, who were seated, peacefully smoking, on a bench near the public Crier's stand.

"Look," said Nicholas Bonhomme, jokingly, "The Blessed Virgin loves flowers, and when the beadle forgets to put some on her altar." . . .

"Unless," suggested Jean Hamel, "it may

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be a gift from her blessed Mother, the good Saint Anne."

"If the flowers on the Blessed Virgin's altar" replied the beadle, "are not to her taste this morning, it is not my fault. They were picked in your garden, Nicholas, and it was your daughter that rigged them up just where they are."

Breaking into a laugh, he grasped the rope with both hands. It was the last bell for Mass. One by one, the men came in, then the young folks, and, at the last stroke there was left at the front, in the cool shade of the young elms, only a long row of buckboards with horses hitched to the little white posts.

In a plain manner like this, and without the help of clerk or scribe, such was the coming to birth of the Church rosebush. For a while, nothing more was said of it.

* * *

Years passed by. Nothing changed at Ancienne Lorette, except that the children became men, that the old went to sleep underground, and that the rosebush pushed its roots

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with all its might into the crannies of the stone. Half creeping, half clinging, it reached the niche; some slender branches entered it, and soon surrounded with their loving arms the Madonna of the Hurons, who, smiling, suffered them to do so, and standing there, with two fingers up-lifted, continued pointing to heaven!

Every fall, the rosebush yielded up its little yellow leaves one by one to the cold winds, then submissively bent its head to the terrible squalls rushing down from the Laurentides, whipped the icy wall, and wore down its thorns and bark on the roughnesses of the stone. Sometimes in the morning it put on a white dress of frost, which it put off again at the approach of noon. If the weather grew a little warmer, the snow from the roof began to weep, and the troughs of the steeple dressed the bush with wonderful crystal blossoms, where the sun's rays came to play in all the seven colors of the rainbow!

Every Spring, the rosebush shook off its icicles and woke up again; the sap sounded the charge in all its buds, which burst under

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the first stirrings of heat, and spread everywhere in little billows of green lace, although down below on the plain and in the woods, all life was still asleep! The rosebush burst into bud when June came, and when all the birds of passage were coming home, and for the secrecy of their nests, offered the shelter of its little hiding-places. At the Fête-Dieu, seeing the village people setting up evergreens along the roadside, it hoisted its own wreaths of pink satin blooms with the golden heart, as a tribute from its sweet-scented being to the Master of Life!

One day, however, it was seen that the pushing of the roots was loosening the stones of the niche, and that crumbs of mortar were falling in front of the door. Once more they began in the village to talk about the rosebush. The washerwomen, hanging out their linen on the lines, made the question one of the orders of the day.

Between two games of checkers, the landowners talked it over, and when the vote was taken, it was for doing away with the rosebush. A large number of the women took up the defence of the shrub, being more senti-

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mental, and moved by reasons of the heart of which the mind knows nothing. It seemed to them that the Faithful Madonna would feel sorry, and that having herself planted the rose-bush in the niche, she would know very well how to take care of the church.

This opinion, however, did not carry at the meeting of the vestry, since Pierre Gauvin, master mason, was hired, at a cost of seven shillings and sixpence, to do away with the cause of the trouble and to repair the church front.

He came there one morning with his helper to begin the work. The people were coming out from Mass; old women in black jackets and goffered caps, old men leaning on their sticks, young girls smiling under their flower-trimmed hats. A great sadness fell on all these faces on seeing the mason there, mixing his mortar. They stayed to watch.

Pierre Gauvin, with the help of his apprentice, had set up his long ladder, and was now climbing it, with his hod on his shoulder, and an iron hook between his teeth. The man's white outline stood out under the seven o'clock sun: the stone pediment of the central

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doorway, the full arches of the old windows, everything, indeed, was laughing in the sunshine, a good breeze was swaying the rosebush, making it wave and sing. The Madonna, herself, seemed to be looking with fixed gaze at the row of cottages, the sandy rising road, the dark clumps of balsam trees, the red roofs of the barns scattered over the hills, and all that beautiful country which spread over the valley at her feet.

The mason had passed the first cornice, he seemed framed in the pattern of the rosebush. Only a few rungs and he would reach the niche. Then a dry crackling was heard, and a cry, coming from twenty throats! The ladder had just broken at the middle, and the upper part, swerving round the breaking-point, hurled the mason and his load down upon the gravel of the walk.

They lifted up the unfortunate man. He had a leg broken and bad bruises on his head. He spent two long months in bed. When he went out for the first time, he saw the rosebush rejoicing in the fine southern breeze, and mocking him with all its flowers, which decked the stone front of the old church with a flam-

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ing cockade. Pierre Gauvin, feeling uneasy, got the church-wardens to cancel his contract.

* * *

And the Madonna of the Huron's standing there, with two fingers up-lifted, continued pointing to heaven.

* * *

The Curé died, and the church-wardens, also Pierre Gauvin.

The young folks of that time, having grown old, kept the mason's mishap in their minds, but the new generation hardly believed in it any longer. Rain followed sunshine, and snow, and rain, and it came about that the stones forming the base of the niche stood out more and more and threatened to fall down.

The council of the church corporation became alarmed. As it had been before, and in the same corner of the vestry, the old rose-bush was again condemned, and this time its execution was committed to the beadle of the parish.

Nazaire Savard, the beadle, a sturdy chap in his forties, had done his hundred strokes in the Saint Maurice lumber camps. Tired of

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the axe and the drive he had married at Three Rivers and had come away to end his days, through wet and dry, in the sacristy of Ancienne Lorette. He now lived in a wooden house facing the church, and seven or eight little Savards, all tough like their father, used to roll about in the dust in front of his door.

The black skirt which the beadles of that day used to knot round their waists with a white cord, hardly suited this fellow. Neither did the fine surplice for feast days, quite adapt itself to the rare curves of his broad back. Alain the blacksmith used often to say that the beadle looked like a gallows-bird that had broken his rope; this was, to say the least, not a nice way of speaking of a man who was almost among the clergy! He handled the extinguisher like a boat-hook, and his manner of kneeling was certainly lacking in ease and grace. On Sunday, when Savard, very well starched up, walked the whole length of the nave to ring the Sanctus, the absent-minded villagers thought they were looking at a raftsmen floating logs, or walking along a boom.

He was not a bad man, but, along with his frownsiness and his iron muscles, he had re-

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tained from his old trade an untiring talkativeness and a habit of grumbling which made him enemies in the parish. The fact is, Old Lorette is a village of washerwomen! Their tongues have great agility, and the good women, while whitening the linen of their Quebec patrons, never fail to blacken their neighbors' reputations. Savard's mere proximity seemed to many of these women quite insupportable! Besides, in spite of the innumerable white flags hung out every morning on the clotheslines, peace was very far from reigning between the washtub and the extinguisher, and the gossips, very much divided on other questions, all united in jumping on Nazaire Savard's back. Well, the beadle was spending this Sunday evening with Mathias Gauvin, son of the late Pierre. The verandah was full of people; they were talking about everything, the weather, the Curé's sermon, the price of hay and raspberries, the deaths and baptisms during the week, and especially about the rosebush! Mathias told of the accident which had happened to his father twenty years before, and of which he had been an eye-witness.

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"And he was too much of a coward to go up again?" rudely answered Savard. "Pooh, that would not have hindered me."

"I have always believed that the Blessed Virgin did not want it," replied Mathias. "My father has many a time climbed up the church walls, both before and after that day, and nothing ever happened to him. Now, you take care, Savard! Better not play with things like that!"

"I should like to see who would prevent me from pruning on the walls of my church. When as children we climbed to the very top of the pines on the Galeuse river, and when we have traveled on rafts for twenty years, it takes more than that to make us afraid!"

"Do as you like, but as for me, I would let the Blessed Virgin take care of her own Church!"

"I invite you all to come and see that tomorrow evening! If you want any cuttings from the rosebush, you can have them."

Curiosity, very much excited, brought the whole village of Ancienne Lorette the next evening over to the front of the church. The Hamels, old and young, were there, the father

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François Kirouac and his boys, who had only to cross the field and go through the turnstile. The Robitailles from the mill, were there, the Blondeaus, the Gauvins, Huot, the schoolmaster, and even Doctor Laurin from des Saules, who on his way back from a sick visit to Grand-Deserts, hitched his horse to a post, and waited in his buggy.

At six o'clock, Savard came out of his house to ring the Angelus. As so many were looking at him, he put on more style than usual, showed up more muscle! Then he brought out a big coil of rope from under the stairway of the lobby. No one offered to help him. The story of Pierre Gauvin passed from mouth to mouth, and no one seemed to want to take any risk in the business. Besides, the Villagers of Ancienne Lorette had an affectionate regard for their old rosebush, which had become a part of their life, and had always been identified with their attendance at every devotional service. They recalled how its ruddy petals used to fall on the white linen of the christenings, and on the black cloth of the funerals. To see it disappear in this way, the most careless were affected, and for the

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old people it was an added sorrow, like an amputation, another fragment of the dear past, torn from them and vanishing away.

Another moment, and Savard's square head appeared in the window of the steeple, and the rope rolled down the front. . .

"That rope isn't going to break" he grinned towards Mathias Gauvin, who was smoking, leaning against the presbytery fence. Then, swaggering, with his sleeves rolled up to heighten the effect he grasped the rope, and swung out, gliding slowly until his foot caught the half-knot tied beforehand to hold him up. At this moment he found himself face to face with the Madonna of the Hurons. Notwithstanding the hour, the wind had not yet fallen, and the rose bush was trembling in all its leaves. Some swallows, disturbed in their retreat, were flying in frightened curves over the heads of the spectators.

This time, there was going to be an end to the poor little shrub, whose whole life had been silent homage, and the long caress of its delicate perfume. It seemed that the Madonna was giving it over to the inevitable! Savard turns round to wave an ironic salute

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to the spectators. A knife glitters in his free hand. He is going to strike! But the Virgin has not spoken her last word! Look! the threatening arm stays raised; a shrill cry comes from the road, comes through the silence:

“Fire! Fire!!”

Every eye turns and sees with horror thick clouds of black smoke rising obliquely from the windows of the beadle's house, then a sharp tongue of flame pierces the roof and shoots towards the sky!

Savard lets himself slide quickly down the rope. One moment he stands, stunned, then hurls himself past the astonished villagers and rushes into his home. His wife has already gone in before him, and a half minute afterwards, she is seen appearing with a baby in her arms, and then falls down fainting in the midst of the spectators. What can be done to check the disaster? The flames, too well fed, are already masters, and laugh at the few pails of water thrown on them. . . an attempt, at least to do something. . . At the end of an hour, all that was left of the beadle's house was a heap of smoking ashes!

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High in her niche, stood the Madonna of the Hurons, with two fingers uplifted, always pointing to heaven.

* * *

Great was the excitement at Lorette. From everywhere the light of the flames had been seen, and the next day, from Saint Foy to Valcartier and from Charlesburg to Pointe-aux-Trembles, everyone knew of the painful lesson taught to poor Savard.

* * *

Since that day, no one has dared to touch what Mary protects. More and more it has unsettled the stones of the church front, it has overrun the cornice, and spread out like a vine. Some years ago, in 1907, for those who must have dates, the parishioners of Ancienne Lorette, wishing to raise a magnificent temple to the glory of God, had to pull down their old church. We must believe that the rosebush had accomplished the number of its days, for everything passed off without any incident. And today, by virtue of the privilege which plants have of surviving indefinitely by the cutting of slips, the Madonna's rosebush, in-

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finitely multiplied, is now perfuming all the gardens of Ancienne Lorette.

And I am inclined to believe that, having for more than half a century lived so close to the heaven of the God of all goodness, having bathed in the light of the Virgin's smile, having listened so often to the Angelus, the slips of the Madonna's rosebush have retained in themselves some element of religion, some remainder of consecration!

I imagine that in the depth of that corolla of pink satin the little golden hearts are still breathing out their prayer to the Virgin Mary, the soft sweet prayer of the scented briar!

At any rate, I feel sure that the roses of the old sweet briar are never happier than when the pious hand of a little girl comes to gather them, to bring them to that quiet corner of the church where, in the shadow, stands the Madonna of the Hurons, with two fingers uplifted, pointing forever to heaven!

**The Wayside Cross of
St. Norbet**



" . . . in the centre of an immense and luminous landscape the wayside cross was touchingly outlined under a wonderfully blue sky."

The Wayside Cross of St. Norbet



It is a tall wooden cross, plain and weatherworn. When my memory, like a finger, turns back the older pages of the book of my life, again and again I see that cross, yonder, beside the road with the deep wheeltracks. It must be that things have a soul, because their images so often plant themselves in our own souls, clinging there as does the lichen to the stone.

Every year, when June brought back the warm sun, strawberries, and liberty, I used to be sent to my grandfather's, at Saint Norbert d'Arthabaska. As soon as the train, issuing from its embankment crossing the swampy wilderness which smiled under the whiteness of the flowering alders, stopped, quivering, at Stanfield Station, I used to see the familiar figure of my uncle Jean appear on the platform.

THE WAYSIDE CROSS

The old mare Souris was there, harnessed to the two-seated buckboard, which danced so pleasantly over the bumps in the road. We went for our baggage, and while the train was disappearing round a curve, Souris quietly took the sandy road which goes off on the Saint Norbert side.

He was a peculiar man, Uncle Jean. Scarcely forty years of age, he seemed considerably more, because his premature baldness was accompanied by a nervous trembling, the mark of untold miseries sustained in the frightful solitudes of the far North. Uncle Jean did not like haste, because his pipe was always going out, and his unsteady hand was kept constantly busy re-lighting it. Souris knew all about that and did not hurry; I could therefore feast my eyes upon all the details of the familiar landscape, and salute them at my ease. At the end of the third mile, the winding road entered the great forest, and soon there appeared the two sandhills, where we used to go at the proper season to eat bunches of red pigeonberry by the handful. Then the stripped burnt land spreads out, with all the

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sadness of its great blackened trunks; blueberries abound there in the spongy moss. A sudden freshness and the graceful curtain of willows tells of water near, and suddenly a dark brooklet issues at the roadside, a brook peopled with timid trout, which come for an instant to play with the light and dash back quickly into the mystery of the dense foliage.

When Souris, having drunk her fill, drew the buck-board through the crinkling sand of the further side, my heart beat quicker; I knew Saint Norbert was quite near! And suddenly, indeed, the forest ended, the horizon opened out in every direction, and before me, in the centre of an immense and luminous landscape, the wayside cross was touchingly outlined, under a wonderfully blue sky.

In the near distance rose the homestead, the delightful barn, the black mouth of the oven, the well, with its dipping-lever, the little dairy, and there was the swinging gate, balanced by a rusty old iron weight. Much further off, the first rampart of the Alleghenies stood out in rugged outline, its enormous shoulder dressed here and there in the dark trimming of the maple groves, for it is here at Saint Norbert

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that the Laurentian plain dies away. Then, high on the rising ground shines the tiny white village, gathered round its little red church.

And for me all of that was only the frame, found again, of the wayside cross, plain and weatherworn, whose first sight had stirred my heart. Certainly it had nothing very remarkable about it, but for all of us, it always brought back a very old and tender family remembrance. My great-grandfather, one of the first colonists of the Bois-Francs, came from Gentilly on foot, having no other riches than his axe and his strong arms. One evening, he stopped near a spring. The ground black and moist, grew large cedars. My ancestor, so they say, having set down his kit, blessed himself, and with sturdy arm, cut down two trees, which he made into a cross. Later, when his brother, better equipped, came to join him, when the log house was built, and when the first seeding was entrusted to the earth amongst the blackened stumps, the colonist completed the work. One fine morning, the rising sun made the golden tears of gum shine like pearls against the white-

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ness of the freshly squared wood, and the traditional cock, roughly carved, found himself at his post at the top of the Cross, ready every day to rouse the dawn!

And thus it was that long ago, the Christ, Friend of the lowly, established Himself at Saint Norbert, at the lower end of the church concession. In the other concessions, in the seventh, in the Gore, and in the extension, there are to be seen highly finished, white-and-gold crosses, with tongues of flame and the instruments of the passion. Here, we pay pious homage to my ancestor's rude work, the humble wooden cross, plain and weather-worn.

When my Uncle Jean, with out-stretched arm, pointed it out to me for the first time with the stem of his pipe, the rain of heaven had already darkened and warped it through the long years; the moss, a great clothier, had stealthily woven a long plush coverlet for its feet. In the little square enclosure which surrounded it, were growing a good number of unlovely weeds; rank sedges, white joint-grass, knot-grass with its blades always spotted; pariahs of the field, which cultivation

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drives away, and which like the beggar men of bygone ages, find a refuge at the foot of the Cross of Christ!

In proportion as I came to know it better, it became more dear to me. I honoured it respectfully, when we were passing in the big haycart, our feet hanging down between the boards, or while clinging to the pole on the swaying load. I revered it again when I was coming home by the cowpath from the upper part of the farm with my string of little spotted trout, caught in the secret eddies of the brook.

At Saint Norbert, the sun has sometimes a splendid way of sinking below the horizon. How often have I seen it on fine evenings, surrounded by little white clouds bordered with deep crimson, glide slowly behind the granite of the little church, which then seemed to be the centre of a great conflagration. A last flame of this setting came for an instant to strike the wayside cross. Under this last caress of the light, the darkened wood became alive, bedizened with violet blossoms, and a strangely definite feeling carried me away altogether. These two out-stretched arms were

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no longer the work of man, but the Canadian land itself, throbbing with its millions of invisible lives, and ardently gushing forth with its evening prayer. It was the Christian land, which in the universal sinking to rest was making its sign of the Cross for the night.

Sometimes, at night, after spending the evening at the Paquin's, I came home, clutching Uncle Jean's arm, because of the stray toads which would cross the road, and which—I shiver yet—my bare foot might crush! Clad in rays of moonlight, the wayside cross then spoke to me with all the mysterious eloquence of the night. Under the soft velvet of the sky, the ridge line of the great pines, draped in shadow, ran very distinctly, showing the capricious outline of the gables, towers and steeples of a dream city, at the entrance of which the wayside cross seemed to be standing on guard.

While hearing my elders speak of the times past, my imagination had quickly rebuilt the years of my mother's youth, which she had spent here, and, because of her, the wayside cross became still more dear to me. I reverently touched the little board nailed over the

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knot, for it was here that she would often come to leave a bunch of common flowers; I imagined that I had before me the sacred mould in which that fine character of hers was formed, which was so eminently good and so profoundly Christian.

I understood why she had so sure a voice, and so far-away a look, when she used to calm my great childish sorrows by telling me "Take that to the foot of the cross."

* * *

After twenty years of absence I again saw the wayside cross. It had not changed. It was only a little darker; the interlaced moss had reached the large knot, and all around it were those lowly and despised weeds, the rank sedge, slender white joint-grass, knot-grass with invariably spotted blades, growing riotous as ever. The children of the by-gone days, having grown into men, were harvesting in the neighboring fields. And in the glowing light, the rhythmic swing of their broad shoulders blent harmoniously with the flashing of the scythes and the falling of the grain. At the foot of the cross, other chil-

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dren were making with astonishment their own discoveries of nature and of life. And because our hearts are like Aeolian harps which thrillingly vibrate in the delicious breeze which streams from the faraway valley of our fifteenth year, for a long while I stood there, my feet in the dust, gazing at the wayside cross, plain as it was, and weatherworn.

Farming on the Embankment



"Do you know what an embankment is? Perhaps they haven't any where you live? It is a little bank of earth thrown up against the house, and held in place by stout timbers dovetailed together."

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IT is the sorrow of a child, but you are well aware that there are no childish sorrows; a sorrow is a sorrow, however brief, and the cloud is never small, which overspreads and darkens all the sky. Even after twenty-five years, when I think of the mishap of which I am going to tell you, I have no more heart to laugh than in those far-off days when I ran over the fields of Saint Norbert in jean breeches. Even yet, in the mirror of remembrance I always confuse the rustic visage of Baptiste Juneau in the same resentment with the slobbering mouth of his red mare.

Do you know what the embankment is? Perhaps they haven't any, where you live? It is a little bank of earth thrown up against the foundations of the house, and held in place by stout timbers dovetailed together. It is the great trump-card against the cold of

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winter: in milder seasons all sorts of things are thrown on it, or leant against it; milk-cans, pails, tools, boots, and what not.

When I arrived at Saint Norbert for my vacation for the first time, and after the usual embraces, Aunt Alphonsine was going back to the stove where a pork omelette was sizzling. My grandfather, filling his pipe, said to me, half joking, half seriously,

"Well, Conrad, you have come to help us work the farm, of course?"

"Yes, Grandpa," I replied, bashfully.

"We have a lot of ground, you know, and we need good men!"

So saying, he looked me over from head to foot, making signs of understanding to my uncles, who, a few paces off, were tilted back on their rush-bottomed chairs. Having strayed into the midst of these rough and sturdy figures, I felt very keenly the inferiority of my black coat and white hands. I envied the dirty little barefoot urchins, who, attracted by the coming of some one from the city, and half hidden behind the doorframe, were greedily taking me in.

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"My man," continued my grandfather, after having lighted his pipe, and thrown his cedar sliver through the damper of the stove, "My man, your father wrote to me last week, and said in his letter to teach you farming, and to make a good habitant of you, such as he was when he lived here and married Philomène. Tomorrow morning, after the cows have been milked, you will put on your uncle Peter's long boots; we are going to pull up stumps in the swamp."

I thought it expedient to put in a request immediately, to be allowed, sometimes, to go out for strawberries, raspberries, and little trout. But I must say, however, that I was perfectly willing to go stump-pulling in the swamp, without having a very clear idea of what it meant. Whatever the idea was, it seemed prodigiously funny, for my grandfather burst out laughing, my uncles noisily joined in, while Aunt 'Phonsine, heart of gold at all times, spoke out, when turning her omelette.

"What a hateful lot you are! Let the poor little chap come in, won't you, before beginning to tease the life out of him!"

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"Of course," added my grandfather, "on rainy days, and on Sunday afternoons, you can give up work and go and fish in the big brook. Say, Jean, what piece of ground shall we give him?"

Jean was seated in the doorway. With an air of importance, he grasped his braces with both hands, gave a few quick puffs, appeared to reflect deeply, and announced, "The field near the river, perhaps?"

"It is too far away."

"Our bit of new land, then?"

"There are bears there."

I was rather uneasy.

"Suppose we give him the sand lot."

"It is poor ground, it is barren. Besides, it is too near the brook; he would always be fishing!"

"Hold on," said Uncle Peter, the youngest of the boys, who was incessantly working at a three-weeks-old moustache, "that's all no good, we are going to give him the embankment at the house."

At this there was general rejoicing again. Grandfather, hands on his knees, showed his

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back teeth laughing, in its corner the spinning-wheel stopped, Uncle Jean went to pump some fresh water to drink, even the dog, puzzled, changed his place, while Aunt Phonsine called the idea a good one, and promised to do the women's work for me. From the doorway, the little listeners disappeared, all legs and arms, going to carry the news to all the range below, of the arrival of a little gentleman from the city, who was going to farm the embankment for the Norberts.

That is how I became tenant-farmer of the embankment. It was near the end of June, and the grain was already showing in the fields. I set bravely to work, and very soon there were little squares on the embankment carefully raked, tiny fences of sticks, stalls for the horses, yards for the cows, and a shed for the rolling-stock. For you may think, we don't farm, even on the embankment, with our fingers. So I had rolling-stock! Uncle Peter had no equal in cutting tailless horses, footless cows, and quite correct little pigs out of a cedar block. With nothing but his big pocket-knife and a poker reddened in the fire, without even a nail, he would make you rakes,

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carts and sleighs, which excited my artless admiration to the highest point.

My sowing finished, it was

“The long, sad slumber of the covered grain,”

and I had a season of idleness. Along the roadside the wild roses were blooming, in the fields innumerable strawberry plants were throwing off their petals. Soon there arose from the grassy turf, through the warm air, that delicious perfume which in springtime the sun distils for the ripening strawberry, out of the most delicate juices of the earth. Soon as the dew fell off a little, grandmother and I went out, she carrying the big pail, and I, the little can. You should have seen the old dame, in peasant's cap, straddle the fences and climb the hill, in spite of her sixty years! Her watchfulness over me was a little strict, but here and there the indulgent backs of some good big rocks, and clumps of underbrush offered shelter, where one could eat the ripest strawberries, the big half-sour ones, and, above all, the long ones, shiny and sugary as anything, which grow in the black loam. And then, at the edge of the woods, amongst the

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rocks and the underbrush, grow the dewberries. That fruit, you know, spoils the preserves, and must never be mixed with true strawberries, everyone knows that!

* * *

On the Embankment, very soon, oats, wheat, barley and buckweat were sprouting. Nothing to do but fold your arms!

Once the strawberries were duly covered up with a disc of paper and sealed in the jars, I had a release until raspberry time. That is the season when the little trout climb up the brooks into the woods, though waters tempered by the good warm sun. The brook ran through the upper end of the farm. Flowing out from Frechette's sugarbush, it crossed Pepin's swamp, lazily skirted the edge of the spruce grove, then entered and wound through the woods, to come out at the road some acres further down, and bury itself again in the shade.

I must now say, the brook was the passion of my boyhood. In the morning, having fed the calves, my friends and I used to set out by the cowpath. My friends were Fred and

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Willie Lavigne. I see them yet; Fred, quick, active, talkative, always with one brace swinging, untidy and unkempt; Willie, quiet, rather a dreamer, both of them with hearts in their hands and shining with health. We used to go barefoot alongside the fence, following the curious windings which cowpaths always make, no one knows why, bubbling over with sunshine and liberty, crushing between our fingers little heads of spearwort, plucking a spike of hay in passing, always keen to jump the fence and bait our hooks.

I assert that those who have not frequented the brooks do not know the delicious art of fishing. They have no idea of the amount of ingenuity, and of skill, and of thrill, that is represented by a bunch of little trout strung on an alder-switch. A trout is timid, brisk in his movements, a lover of shadow and mystery. It lodges in the hollows of the banks, under the large leaves of the water-plants, under the roots of old stumps, in the shelter of dead logs fallen across.

Stealing to a little bridge, you are sure he is lurking in perfect stillness under the timbers. In broad daylight, he sometimes comes

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out to warm his back in the sun, but the least noise, the fall of a leaf on the surface of the water, the shadow of a bird passing with a flutter, makes him disappear like a flash.

To fish for brook trout, you need a sinker, a fine line, and a rod no longer than your arm, but, above all, you must be able to keep quiet, and to know the right spots. You creep up with all the precautions of an Indian on the war-path, careful not to cast a shadow, or to stir the rushes or the blue flag-lilies. You let five or six inches of line dip noiselessly into that dark corner where a little soapy foam has gathered. Then, suddenly, you feel a little demon who struggles and tries to drag you and your rod and line, down into his den. You draw back quickly, and—there is no joy like it on earth, the glittering, raging little thing twists out into the sunshine, while your jealous chums leave their positions and rush with all speed to try yours!

When all the eddies in the meadow are fished out—for that day—, you go into the woods. Fishing becomes more difficult but more exciting, the big ones like the cool, that is well known. You must reduce your line

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to the very shortest, tread with even greater caution, must not tangle your line in the willows, you push the ferns aside with one hand, and with the other—offer the temptation. There you are, holding your breath! Hey! a great tug shakes your arm deliciously! Now is the crucial time! You must draw briskly, calculate your angle closely, using the little space between the branches which are crossed just above you. If you get caught on one, nine times out of ten the rascal unhooks himself, and goes to tell the others! No use trying any more: go further on!

Oh! those brooks in the woods! It is they, I fully believe, who have made of me the utter savage that I am! Oh, the charming vistas which they set forth at every bend, for the sole enjoyment of the great satin butterflies, the warblers and finches of the Lord! All it needs, indeed, is that Man should cease from visiting a piece of ground, for everything to develop in beauty, for the angles to soften, for death itself to steal away under the silent and regular up-springing of life. Let but a tree fall across running water, then without delay a tiny legion of mosses busies itself in

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covering it with a velvet counterpane daintily embroidered with the finest lace. How many times have I seated myself on one of those dead trees adorned in this way by Mother Nature, there in the gathering twilight, crossed in every direction by the golden rays filtering through the foliage, in a silence throbbing with the riotous pulsations of life! My feet in the cool water, my hands digging down with delight into the mossy cushion, I have leant for a long time over the mirror of the water, where, with a background of foliage bordered with the blue of the sky, was reflected the head of a boy, with a nimbus of straw, dreaming those dear and pure dreams of the ten-year-old, dreams which never return!

On the diminutive farm on the embankment, the stalks of wheat and barley were shooting straight up, and in the heart of the sheath swelling with sap, was tingling the promise of the grain. My fences were now of the lowest, they were covered up, and the buckwheat was hiding the shed where the carts and sleighs along with several used-up wooden horses, were thrown together in a

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heap. And even the square foot of mustard, right in the middle of the cow-field, was furnishing a nice shade to the good cattle standing under the broad sun, and was giving a tinge of gold to the greenery of the embankment.

* * *

Then the daisies' unwelcome beauty appeared in the meadows. White asters and goldenrod enlivened the neutral tints of the rail-fences, and at dawn the metallic song of the scythe began to be heard. One fine morning, we set out in the big haycart for Nicolet River, where Grandfather owned a point and a little barn. Thanks to my diplomacy, Fred and Willie were of the party. "The River," the voyage of our dreams, for all three of us! Think of it! We were going five miles, to the shore of a real river, ten times as wide as our brook, and with fine swirls in it, with red bridges, ferry-boats, and big fish as long as that! To this heavenly prospect, add the pleasure of the long drive through the woods, the chance happening upon cherry-trees, clusters of pigeon-berries, and bushes of prickly goose-berries!

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When we went to cut hay at the River, Aunt 'Phonsine arranged things royally. No end of pancakes were piled up, separated by golden shavings of maple sugar, and as Man does not live by pancakes alone, there was a brick of cold pork done up in a white napkin. At the River, we had our dinner on the incline leading into the little barn. When the men, having had their meal, began to roll up their jackets to put under their heads to snatch a nap, that was the time for us, the young ones—there was no time for sleeping at our age—to haul out our lines and go and cut a good pole from the cherry-trees. At this warm hour of the day, the big carp dozed in the sun, motionless, stirring their fins and gills imperceptibly. There is nothing so stupid as a carp, especially a sleepy carp. It was no use getting our hooks right under their idiot mouths! Not much! They would not budge. When it became quite certain that it was no use, we took our revenge by poking them up with our fishing-poles. Truly, the little trout in our big brook were much more interesting. Sometimes a whitefish, with a quick flounce of his tail, would turn over for a moment,

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showing his silver side in the sun. A flash would then run over the grey slate and the white sand, and our enthusiasm would again light up. We were chasing the runaway from point to point, up to the moment when we saw the cart come bumping up between the haystacks. When they take boys over to the River, it is so that they may be of some use, isn't it? So, without grumbling, up we jumped into the rack to pack down the fine long hay in due and proper form.

At the River, it always makes a long day, and we always bring back a cartload to the homestead. I can still see Grandfather putting the padlock on the barn, Uncle Jean poling down the load, while we hoisted up the jar and the empty basket. The forks were well stuck in, pipes lighted, Grandfather had taken his place between the racks, and at the cry, "Hold on tight!" the mare started up the track leading to the main road.

These homecomings on the jolting load of hay have left memories which even yet stir my heart. The landscape was new to me, and the point of view was raised from the ground. The disappearing sun accented the white-

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ness of the barns, lit fires in the windows of the distant houses, and gave back gleams of steel from the smallest streams. We came across unknown cattle, cows heavy with milk and feeding, which a little barefooted boy was driving home with a switch. And the pleasure of brushing past the lower branches of the trees! of holding a handful of leaves between the fingers, and letting the branch fly back into the faces of the others! When we were passing the *grand ruisseau*, the mare took a drink, and Grandfather—we always took an axe when going to the River—Grandfather, I say, cut us a well-loaded little wild cherry-tree, and threw it on top of the load to occupy our spare time. Oh, the little wild-cherry! There are no two fruits like it in all the Laurentian land! Not at all sweet, but slightly acid, the more you eat of it, the more you want, and when you think you are quite filled up, you sit down to supper as if you hadn't had a thing. The little wild cherry can be eaten in many ways, in a dish, or by handfuls, clinging up in a tree, but, beyond question, the best way is like this, wallowing in the sweet-smelling hay, and

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bumping along the road, caressed by the evening breeze!

On the embankment, the stalks of wheat were completely filled out, the buckwheat almost ripe, the oats, a little late, were opening out their graceful clusters. One morning, Aimé Paquin walking home from singing a Mass for the Dead, called out to me without leaving the road,

"Conrad, now is the time to get in your harvest. If you are going to have a 'Bee,' ask us over."

"All right, Mr. Paquin."

Then, seeing that he was making fun of me, I gave him this Parthian shot, as he was passing the big crabapple tree:

"For your little bit of buckwheat, you won't need to have a 'Bee,' anyhow."

And Aimé Paquin prided himself on always having the best buckwheat in the Parish.

* * *

That week, it was Baptiste Juneau's turn to go and carry the milk to the creamery. You don't know Baptiste Juneau, of course. A big fellow, with tremendous shoulders, and a

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broad close-shaven face, furnished with a pair of extraordinary ears, and who always spoke at the top of his voice, as if he had five hundred people before him. I think he must have been born in his beef mocassins, for I have never seen his feet in anything else, either on Sundays or holidays, or on the evening of Timond's wedding to Marie Dieudonné, or even at the burial of 'Poléon Demers' daughter. He was thought miserly, and, although his wife was still wearing her wedding-jacket, and took their boots off her little boys immediately after Grand Mass, the report ran that Baptiste had a sugar-kettle filled with paper money, and that even if Medée Lavigne was leaving for the States— However, that is enough! It does not do to speak ill of a neighbor! But what I am sure of, and can say, is that he had three big apple-trees behind his dairy, loaded with prodigious quantities of little crabapples. Well, the skinflint, who was feeding them to his pigs, would not let us take—even a wormy one! But, once in a while, Baptiste, his wife and his big black dog, all went to make hay at the other end of his farm. And then you need not believe that Fred, who could climb like a

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squirrel, would hesitate about paying a visit to those big branches. And even when Grandfather discovered one day—that hidden treasure, when he was taking some hay out of the mow—that evening, when he was putting his pipe on the shelf, he said, looking at me significantly:

“Just fancy, 'Phonsine, those squirrels have begun to carry Baptiste's apples over into my hay. Conrad, you ought to set some traps in the haymow!”

Then, one morning of that week—I remember as though it were yesterday—the sun woke me a little later than usual, in the loft where I used to sleep, just between the maple-sugar cupboard and the long strings of Indian corn hanging from the rafters. I put my head out of the dormer window. Two robins were picking up worms between the rows of cabbages in the garden. Père Dieudonné was going down in a cart towards the division-line. Willie and Fred were looking after the calves, which, with their heads in the trough, were jostling each other with their hind-quarters. Mère Alexis was spinning at her door, and I saw her bare arm moving regularly

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to and fro. To those accustomed to the parish, that meant eight o'clock. When I lifted the trap door to go down, the table was cleared, and the house was quiet. Bright squares lay along the floor, making the nail-heads shine. Aunt 'Phonsine was rocking herself and peeling potatoes. A plate of pancakes was on the table, evidently awaiting the latecomer. Aunt 'Phonsine had not her usual manner, and in reply to my "Good morning," she said to me, with a half unwilling air:

"I let you sleep this morning; your vacation is coming to an end; you must have rest, so that you can work at your books."

She had a reverent way of saying "work at your books," had dear Aunt 'Phonsine, which appeals to me even yet.

"Slept like a top, Aunty; I did not even hear Baptiste clattering his milkcans."

Aunt 'Phonsine, getting the maple syrup from the cupboard and pouring out my tea, seemed to watch me gloomily. I thought something seemed wrong, but at that age one sees only the rich present time, and there are no dark forebodings to prevail against the powerful combination of the appetite at ten

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years of age, and the double seduction of pancakes and maple sugar. So I took my breakfast cheerfully, like one who does not know that sorrow stalks in his shadow, and that, if he but turn round, he will find himself face to face with her!

Nine o'clock. What is there to do this morning? The last rains have stirred up the waters of the brook. And then, I have no companions today. Behind the barn, I see Fred, bending like a worm over the handle of the big rake. Further away, Willie is making sheaves. At any rate, bareheaded, and hands in pockets, I go out on to the verandah. The sun shines brightly down on it, and Bull, his muzzle between his paws, is lazily warming himself. And there am I, going to the end, just to tease the good doggie, and Oh, horror! on my embankment I see a sight which roots me to the ground! I shake with anger even now, in writing of it! Yes, all my harvest, all the crops of which I was so proud: wheat, oats, buckwheat, everything was thrown down, pillaged, dug up, devoured! Even my shed was in little bits, and my rolling-stock scattered over the grass at the foot of the bank. A

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nameless devastation without any parallel in all my short history!

It is well known, is it not, that all great sorrows are mute? So was mine, for some moments. I knew the loss was absolute and without any cure. But the natural desire to seek the cause of this jumped quickly to my brain.

"Aunty, Aunty!" I cried, racing back into the house.

Before I could say more about it, Aunt 'Phonsine had already taken up in her tender heart her good office of comforter.

"It hurts very badly, eh, my dear Conrad?"

I burst into tears.

"Yes, Aunty, all my harvest is lost. Who is it that has played that trick on me?"

"It is no trick, my poor boy, it is an accident! I am going to tell you all about it; but don't cry! A great big boy! Lay it at the foot of the Cross! Our Saviour has borne much more than that for us. And He had never done any wrong, while as for us, we are always wicked. Don't cry!"

Aunt 'Phonsine shook her apron into the potato dish and continued:

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“Baptiste Juneau came early this morning to get the milk for the creamery. As Jean wanted help to sharpen his scythe, Baptiste—he is always so careless—left his mare near the embankment. The mare, of course,—we must not be angry with the poor beast, she very seldom gets anything to eat at home—the mare stretched out her neck, and in four mouthfuls, threw everything to the ground. It was an accident! Don’t cry! Lay this at the foot of the Cross!”

And the dear woman held me against her breast, drying my tears.

“Yes, but that does not prevent all my crops being lost.”

“Jean gave her some good whacks on the muzzle, and I can tell you she backed up, that mare of Baptiste’s!”

To be told that Uncle Jean had given Baptiste’s mare some good whacks on the muzzle consoled me a little bit.

“Don’t cry,” continued my aunt, “next year I will give you a big square in the garden, and no mare of Baptiste’s will eat up your grain. Don’t cry! Lay that at the foot of the Cross!”

What enraged me most, was submitting to

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the hypocritical condolences of visitors on that evening. Everybody wanted to magnify the extent of the disaster. Médée Lavigne assured us, with a cat-like air, that it was the finest wheat in the parish. Aimé Paquin, naturally, was chiefly sorry for the loss of the buckwheat. As for Baptiste Juneau, when I saw his pumpkin-head and his ears like a bats' framed in the doorway, my blood just boiled. But the cup ran over when, after having seated himself, he wanted to make fun of the event.

I was in a fine rage, and I nailed him to his chair by telling him quite plainly, to the scarcely disguised joy of all the others:

"Yes, if you would give your old mare something to eat, she would not stuff herself with what belongs to other people!"

Along the road of life, I have many a time seen a blind chance, a stupid accident, ruin in one moment hopes which had been built up with much trouble, and every time, on the morrow of these disasters, I have been tempted to say to myself,

"It does not do to plant on the house-embankment."

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And along the roadway of life, I have many times sown the best of my mind and spirit in the hearts of pupils and friends, whom I believed to be sincere and steadfast, and many times also, with the passing of the days, I have seen those hearts shut themselves up, and the faces harden, as it were under a stranger's mask! But, because the Christ has set no bounds to His divine precept to love our fellow-man, our brother, I have said to myself,

“In spite of all, I will still plant on the embankment!”

The Lonely Heart



"Beside his bed there was a large blue chest, nearly always open, and bursting with books."

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ALL, very tall, with broad shoulders.

Under the straw of a huge stumpy hat, an angular face, traversed by a stiff moustache of inky blackness, and the uneasy fire of two black eyes shadowed by bushy eye-brows. Braces cut in the form of an X out of a single piece of cowhide, and worn over a shirt of homespun, beef mocassins held up under the knee by cord garters. Thus does Charles Roux appear to me through the mists of my childish remembrance.

Charles Roux was "not all there!" That at least is what the Saint Norbert folk unanimously affirmed.

The trifle of rent which he went to gather in at Saint Christophe every month, enabled him to board with Médée Lavigne, our opposite neighbor, who rented him half of his

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garret. Strong as an ox, Charles willingly helped with the farm work when the occasion was pressing, and it was then a pleasure to see him slash down the long hay of the black lands with his terrible scythe. But, oftener than not, he kept himself in his loft, seated at a little table before the narrow dormer window, his head in his hands, buried in the reading of some old book.

How many times have my friend Fred and I not climbed with stealthy steps up the stairway without a railing, which led to Charles Roux's room! We entertained an intense curiosity to see him thus, under the soft shade of his straw hat, motionless as a statue, his brows wrinkled, making no movement except to turn a page. Neither Fred nor I were amongst the intellectuals; the sun, the brooks and the bush took up all our cerebral activities. We could never reach an understanding of why the poor devil condemned himself incessantly to study interminable lessons, without being in any way obliged to do so. Evidently the folks in the concession were perfectly right! Charles was crazy! Another proof: beside his bed there was a large blue

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chest, nearly always open, and bursting with books! I must confess to my shame that we did not refrain from stealthily lifting the trap of the loft and spying upon the inoffensive mania of poor Charles. It was the leaven of mischief of which the clever Coppée has disclosed traces even in the pure heart of the Sister of Charity. Don't you know the little Sister of Charity who was looking between the curtains of the hospital and laughing when she saw on the scene of a marionnette theatre across the street, Guignol murder his brave landlord coming unsuspectingly to collect the rent? This leaven of mischief, I say, was boiling up in our young hearts and mounting to our heads! And how many times before bravely running away with all speed, have we not thrown the deep insult through the narrow opening of the trap-door, "Crazy Charles, Crazy Charles!"

And scrambling down the stair, we would hear a heavy step and growls of anger, but the crazy man never ran after us. Neither did he complain to our people. That is why we always began again. When Charles had read long enough, he opened the old hymn

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book with the split back, which he always kept on the window-sill. In the strong, rough voice which was indicated by his appearance, he would sing the church chants without any particular order, introits, hymns and psalms.

When in the evening with a switch in our hands we were coming home with our cows through the little cedars in the swamp, snatches of halleluias and verses of the psalms would reach us over the roofs of the barns and the fleeces of white clover fields. Without knowing why, I found an infinite charm in this simple strain of the plain-chant, which is such an admirable setting for the uplifting poems of the Shepherd-King; I also, when pushing aside the branches of cedar brushing my face, would hum the long Amen and scattered phrases of the Ave Maria Stella!

Arrived at the house, we did not cease to hear the untiring singer. In the deepening silence which evening spreads over the country, the rough voice of Charles was scattering bars of notes from the Kyrie, and joyous airs from the pastoral symphony. It echoed through the milking yard where the maids, with their heads resting against the

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hind-quarters of the red cows, were drawing out the milk between their moist fingers; it freely passed through the open doors and windows, bringing thoughts of the Church to the grandmothers attending to their spinning-wheels and the young women bending over the cradles. Then the sun disappeared behind the masses of verdure on the hill, and dark shadows rapidly blotted out the land. Framed always in his dormer-window, Charles sang without any stop, sang for himself alone; he sang because his heart was lonely in this world, because his heart was wounded with an incurable hurt, and this kindly music, flowing from the heart of the middle ages, dropped on his wounds like balm, and spoke to him like a friend. Today the voice of Charles Roux is stilled for ever; tell me, good people of Saint Norbert, is there not something missing, even in the sweetness of the soft summer evenings in your placid homes?

Until then, I had never gone very near to the crazy man; I was soon going to have the opportunity of becoming better acquainted. One day, indeed, when we thought he had gone away to collect his rent, we had made

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up our minds, for lack of other amusements, to pay a visit to the blue chest. At that age deliberations are short, as short as experience and wisdom!

In four jumps we were in the loft, skipping and shouting, rolling on the patch-work quilt covering the poor unpainted bed, although the mattress stuffed with indian-corn-stalks creaked like a saw-mill!

The chest was closed, but the open padlock was hanging on the brass hasp. For everything that appertained to the usages and customs of Saint Norbert, to the theory and practise of the little brooks, I found in Fred a master of undisputed excellence—yes, but in visiting a library, for instance, something hitherto unheard of in the parish, my own superior learning—I already knew the horrors of the past participle and the rule of three—gave me the leading part! So I gravely explained the mysteries of the blue chest to my friend Fred.

And what an assortment he kept in it, flutes and whistles and antique full-bound volumes, smelling of dust and the eighteenth century!

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Titus Livius neighbored old Rollin; little Berquins crowded against the Latin dictionary; above all, there was an old edition of "Studies in Nature," by the lovable Bernardin de St. Pierre, and one of these volumes opened of itself at a page in "Paul and Virginia." I sat on a corner of the chest and began to read aloud for Fred's philosophic instruction, who, with mouth open, was respectfully turning over a big mathematical volume of Baillargé.

"Who would wish to live, my son, if he
"knew the future? A single misfortune fore-
"seen gives us such vain unrest! The sight
"of a coming misfortune poisons all the days
"which precede it. It does not do to look too
"deeply into what is about us; and heaven,
"which gives us the power of reflection so
"that we may foresee our needs, has given us
"our needs, to set bounds to our reflections—"

The sound of a step on the stairway! Quick as a flash, Fred flings the Baillargé wide open on the bed, to skip through the dormer-window, run along the roof, and slide down the lightning-rod. I wanted to follow him but hesitated a moment, still stupidly holding my Bernardin between my fingers!

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A huge cold hand seized me by the wrist! I was lost! ! A voice which I knew too well thundered:

"What are you doing here?"

"! ! !"

"Speak up! I don't eat children!"

"I—I—I was looking at your books, Monsieur Charles."

"Oh, you were looking at my books! You were looking at my books!"

Without letting me go, he sat down in his accustomed place. My throat was dry, and I trembled like a bird caught in the hand of the fowler. Charles had the name of sometimes getting into dreadful rages! To my great surprise, however, he said to me in a voice which I did not recognize, because he was trying to make it soft and coaxing:

"Why do you come and insult me on the stairway, like the ignorant little boys of hereabouts. Did I ever do anything to you?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur Charles!

"The people about here have told you that I am crazy, eh?"

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And he bent towards me a little as if to read my thoughts. I hesitated, but at last I replied frankly,

“Yes, Monsieur Charles.”

He still looked at me, long, then suddenly two large tears filled his dark eyes. I had never before seen a man shed tears, and I innocently considered them defensive armour, a privilege of my own age! And then, Charles Roux was the last man in the world whom I could believe capable of tears! Because of that, and also because I felt all the injustice of my conduct, I burst out sobbing. It appeared then to me that Charles was not a fool, but something quite different, but what it was, I could not as yet, very well make out. I understand today that he was a being put out of gear by some secret sorrow, and besides that, one eager for knowledge, an inveterate dreamer, lost in the environment of simple people who gave themselves up to making a living for themselves and their children, and who were unable to understand him because they were entirely indifferent to the dust of the past and the visions of the future.

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I begged Charles' pardon, we made peace near the windowsill with the swallows as witnesses, and from that time we were friends.

* * *

Some years passed away. I came back to Saint Norbert, grown-up, and with some reputation. I was no longer the child of long ago, and I too, alas! I myself had some books in the bottom of my trunk!

Do you remember, dear sister, our arriving at grandfather's old house? They did not make fun of us any more! You were a young lady! As for me, I did not dare to go barefoot as formerly and rush out to run a great race on the road, just as a greeting to the country.

Aunt 'Phonsine said:

"Charles Roux knows you have arrived. He is coming to spend the evening! Get your answers ready. He has questions to ask you about the moon and the stars!"

We bridled up, because, funny as the fact appears to us today, you and I, little sister, were then indeed the authorized representa-

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tives in that parish of all science, human and divine. We were questioned as to everything, on predestination and purgatory, on politics and the Transvaal war, on the moon and the forecast of the weather. We had to give a decision upon everything, and before that decision, every one bowed! How greatly has our star waned since then!

Beyond question, the most respectful, the most eager of all our disciples was Charles Roux. He arrived that evening, as Aunt 'Phonsine had predicted, and with his duck vest on his arm and his huge straw hat. Immediately he had no eyes except for us. Through all the tobacco smoke and the gay chat, Charles, who did not smoke, and who never smiled, employed all the arts of diplomacy to prevent the conversation from falling into those lower levels where the rest of the company naturally placed it. He forced me to talk literature, although from the beginning of July I had dreamed only of trout and raspberries! He made me talk geometry, although I was here only from a foolish fondness for many-sided and fantastic Nature, to enjoy the delightful windings of the cowpaths

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and the brooks through the woods! Truly the trade of an Oracle is a tiresome one, when one is only sixteen.

From geometry to astronomy is only a step, and Charles Roux spurred us on from the square of the hypotenuse to the square of Pegasus! We had to give figures, frightful figures, with long tails of naughts! Aimé Paquin listened with open mouth, and forgot to light his pipe; Uncle Dieudonné nodded his head and smoked furiously to clarify his ideas; as for Médée Lavigne, accustomed to the vagaries of his lodger, he smiled with an understanding air and made significant signs to us. Grandmother, with hands on knees, rocked herself in silence, and in unmixed admiration for so much learning piercing the clouds of her environment.

Charles Roux was visibly enjoying his triumph over these ignoramuses, whom he was repaying that evening at a single stroke, for all their mockery and disdain. To render his victory complete, and to have us all to himself he took us out, almost by force, onto the verandah to point out the principal constellations to him.

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Do you remember, dear sister, what a fine evening it was; and how the multitude of stars were twinkling, winking as if to speak to us, to make us understand their mysterious and faraway language? The forest near at hand was threatening us with its thick shadows, but being so close to the house, and guarded by the big luminous eyes of the windows, we had no fear.

We inhaled deeply the delicious freshness of the evening air, while the crickets chirped in the grass, and Charles Roux waited impatiently for his lesson.

Sister, let us confess our sins, and ask pardon from the Master of the stars! *Pecavimus!* But we were too far involved to retreat! We had a full taste of the role of *Pic de la Mirandole!* But, is it surprising if that evening, we made out on grandfather's verandah whole pieces of a fantastic map of the heavens for the instruction of our unhappy friend! I feel some remorse today, in thinking that poor old Charles for the rest of his life took *Altair* of the *Eagle* for *Sirius*, and *Cassiopoeia* for the *Little Bear!*

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Something, however, must condone this scientific dishonesty and, in thinking it well over, I can give myself almost plenary absolution. It is the conviction of having let fall into that wounded soul the alms of one hour of pure joy, of having for a few minutes, peopled with our friendship the lonely desert of that poor heart!

The Old Farm Not for Sale



"The cartload of oats was slowly ascending the grassy road which led to the house from the end of the farm."

The Old Farm Not for Sale



THE day, a beautiful autumn day, was turning cooler at its close. The cartload of oats was slowly ascending the grassy road which led to the house from the end of the farm.

Seated comfortably between the racks, Felix Delage, a man well advanced in years, was enjoying the serenity of the hour and, still more, that delicious fatigue which is the privileged lot of the worker on the land. At his feet, his son Basile, with pitchfork in one hand, was driving the horse. As they turned the corner of the barn, the father exclaimed, "Look, Basile, it's done, François Millette has sold his farm." And in a lower tone he repeated, "He has sold out! He has sold!"

Over there, on the other side of the road, on an enormous billboard standing out against the blue sky, the huge letters of the staring advertisement were spread out on the white

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ground of the freshly painted sheet iron. Workmen were still engaged at its foot, bracing the frail structure to pickets driven in among the golden-rod and the rusty burdocks.

"They put that up this afternoon," said Basile.

"Yes, and that is another farm that is going to fall into fallow. We are surrounded, my dear boy. Last year, Jean-Baptiste Marcil sold his farm, then it was Pierre Trudeau, and then Joseph Charron! I always thought François would hold on."

"It is the children, likely! They all wanted to sell, all of them. The two young ones in town must have persuaded their father to do it."

The cart went jolting into the barn, and while unhitching the father continued:

"My poor Basile, our Chambly road is done for! Our fine farms, the best anywhere around here, are lost for agriculture! There is no more farming!"

The shafts fell to the floor. Basile took the horse and went into the stable. With wearied step, the old man made his way to the house.

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A fine type of Canadian was Felix Delage! Of middle height, rather stout, he was like the oaks planted before his door. With strong sun-burnt face, thick and very white hair—snow on ivory—, one was surprised to find under his silvered eyebrows, the blue eyes of a child. His lips wore a constant smile, that also the smile of a child, preserved through the storms of seventy years of life, and which was given full expression when he spoke in the strong and tempered voice which was natural to him.

The Delage farm was one of the oldest and richest of the district. It fronted on that old road which joins Chambly and Longueuil, and touches the Saint Lawrence at the exact spot where Charles LeMoyne had built his house. This well-known road, the old people still call it "the Boston Road," before the building of railways, was the highway of travel, the route of invasions also; to write the story of the Chambly Road would mean writing a good share of the economic and military history of Canada.

An ancestor of the Delages, a Cavalry Officer discharged from service, came during the

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French regime to take up land two miles and a half from the village of Longueuil.

It appears that this Delage was of the yeomanry, or landed gentry, and indeed, those who have conversed with our Felix recognize his evident good birth, in a refinement of language and manner not always found among our people.

Felix Delage belonged to the old school of believers who have the wisdom to accept religion, as we accept life itself, unreservedly, and no finer family than his own used to sit under the pulpit of the Longueuil Church. But love of the land and enthusiasm for its cultivation, proper farming, methodical and intelligently reasoned farming, distinguished above everything the fine nature of this man. His octagonal stable, built after plans of his own, was a marvel of ingenuity, and was known within a radius of twenty miles. Founder and President of the Agricultural Society, he had been for thirty years the adviser, the model, the inspiration of all the farmers of the Chambly Road.

And here on his return the veteran agriculturist sees his beautiful dream of agricultural

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improvement crumbling to the dust. The craze of real estate speculation, after ravaging the island of Montreal, was now invading the South shore, overrunning the surroundings of old Longueuil, and advancing into the open country. Like unwholesome mushrooms, the real estate agents' little square huts, hideously painted, were springing up in the middle of the fields. Unsightly billboards were stuck up all over the grass, the monstrous epitaphs of an immense cemetery, that of the good old fertile and faithful land. One after another, the neighbors had sold out, and Felix Delage could no longer count any one around him except his son Joseph, whose farm adjoined his own on the South, Basile, who worked the land along with him, and his old friend, François Millette, who was coming to sit on the verandah this very evening to talk over the good old times. And even he was going to fail him, was going away, a traitor to the ground and to the tacit understanding which bound them both together! And, for all that, he had come last Sunday, without saying a word about it. It was shame, no doubt, which

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closed his mouth! Like a child's conscience, the conscience of an old man shudders at wrong-doing!

Thinking of these things, Felix Delage, without greeting his grandchildren, came into the large kitchen where the women were going to and fro, and sank into his rocking-chair near the window.

"Well, little girls, another piece of bad luck! François Millette has sold out!"

The three women were waiting for this outbreak. They looked at each other without saying a word.

"We are left all alone on the Chambly road up to the third mile! All alone!"

And, doubled up on the arms of his chair, the old man began to weep. Basile's young children, understanding from their grandfather's grief that something serious had happened, were silent, and went to sit down on the bench behind the table. There was silence in the kitchen. After a little while, Basile came in and set a jar wrapped in a white towel on the table. Without a word, he hung his big straw hat on a wooden peg, and walked towards the pump, rolling up his sleeves.

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Felix, the father, nervously left his chair and went out into the road. The sun was setting gloriously amid purple clouds, against which the soft curve of Mount Royal and the fine steeple of Longueuil were sharply defined. In the fields, the great scattered elms were beginning to brood over the dusk, and their lazily waving branches seemed to be silently and playfully signalling to something invisible. But for the old man all this evening peace was set at naught by the annoyance of the long billboard brutally interposed between the sky and himself, and this he would constantly have before his eyes weekdays and Sundays, rain or shine, in unceasing defiance of his profound faith and his love of the land!

The workmen, their job finished, reached the truck again, which rattled a moment and then started, raising the white dust of the road. And Felix Delage stayed there leaning on the gate between the two lilac hedges, watching the violated field, over which tremors of rosy light were still flickering.

Then a clear little wavering voice rose behind him: "Grandpa, come to supper."

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Suddenly snatched from his dream and his trouble, the grandfather took little Joseph in his arms, and went in.

* * *

Sunday afternoons in the heart of autumn have a delicious softness of their own. There is no longer the grilling heat of summer, and the cold has not yet set in to shut the doors and throw shawls over the women's shoulders. On the Delage's gallery they have set out all the rockers and armchairs. The eldest son, Joseph, is there with his family. The children are playing hide-and-seek under the arbor, running in the grass and as far as the road. At one end of the verandah the women are having a lively talk, while at the other end Basile and Joseph are on each side of their father and they are planning the fall work. Motor-cars follow each other along the road incessantly, overhung with little clouds of dust: little machines carrying bourgeois families who are taking advantage of the last fine Sundays; touring cars and luxurious limousines running at a great pace towards the frontier; a monotonous, tiresome string,

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to which, however, the Delages, like all the people on the Chambly Road, are accustomed.

All at once a heavy machine, which has blown the horn several times, suddenly swerves through the gateway and comes to a stop in front of the house.

The chauffeur lights a cigar while two gentlemen come out from the back seat. One of them, a big man with a flushed face, hands Felix, coming to meet them, a business card, while the latter reads carelessly.

"You are Mr. Felix Delage? My name is Stevenson, Real Estate Agent. I have considerable money to place on the South Shore.

I am told your farm is not sold, and I have come to look at it and make you a proposition.

I seriously intend buying, and can furnish you with satisfactory references."

"My dear Sir," replied Felix, "although your name is entirely unknown to me, I am ready to believe you seriously intend to buy, but I must tell you at once that my land is not for sale."

Stevenson appeared not to have heard. Lighting a cigar, he continued, like a man accustomed to this way of going about a deal.

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"I am in a position to allow you the best possible terms, in which ready money will come in for a good share. Let me introduce my Notary, Mr. Forest, who is ready to close the deal immediately. Will you let us take a little look at the place?"

"Certainly, I shall be pleased to go with you. But I repeat that my farm is not for sale, not while I live, and while my two sons have their good arms."

The three men set out into the pathway which led to the rear of the buildings. The view stretched from there over fields freshly harvested, bristling with short golden stubble. Deep and perfectly aligned ditches ran towards the east, as far as the edge of the woods, where the light foliage of the little white birches was quivering.

"Superb!" murmured the Estate Agent, under his breath.

"You see there, Sir, a farm which has always been perfectly cultivated by my forbears, and which I am trying to treat as they did. You will not find any swamp, any place uncultivated. Fifteen days ago, that field over there would have shown you what the ground

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yields to those who give it work and fertilizer. Look! last July you ought to have seen that piece of clover between the two elms. It was as thick and white as a sheep's back.

"You go as far as the woods?"

"Up to the woods on the right, yes. And for depth, as far as the Gentilly range. You see those telephone posts? That is the boundary."

"All right, I offer twenty-five thousand dollars, cash. Does that suit you?"

"It is worth more than that."

"You are making difficulties. Do you know what was paid for the neighboring lands?"

"I don't know, and I don't want to know."

"How much do you ask?"

"You don't understand me!"

"Really?"

And the capitalist, flicking off the cigar-ash with his finger, began to examine more closely this type of man, a new type for him.

Felix Delage continued;

"You have children?"

"No, I am a bachelor, and I am satisfied."

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Felix furled his snowy brows and turned towards the Notary, who was playing with a bit of grass;

“And you, Sir?”

“Oh! I have six children.”

And the Notary's eyes looked straight into those of his questioner, as if to say: I am of your race, we understand each other, you see!

“All right! these children have cost you, you and your wife, a lot of work, and caused you a lot of trouble. If anyone offered those children of yours \$25,000, for their mother, what would they answer?”

The Notary smiled quietly.

“As for me, continued Felix, I am the child of my land! The land, do you see, gentlemen, is the ancestor whose care is transmitted to us by the life and death of others. Like the very old, it is incapable of movement or defense but it knows how to smile with all its flowers and in the morning to have a tear on every blade of grass. It has a mysterious language, but as distinct as the human word for him who knows how to listen. And, look here, no doubt at this moment, Mr. Stevenson,

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you hear nothing but the chirping of the birds, and the klaxon of the autos on the road. But for me, a voice rises from these wild fields, from the cut grass and from the hawthorn hedges, and that voice implores my pity, and says: "I have always served you well, do not part with me." That is why I tell you that my land is worth more than all that you offer me!"

Stevenson threw away his cigar. His special psychology found itself at fault. Was this a sincere type? Or, indeed, was he dealing with a rustic who was rather skilful in squeezing out big money? At all events, Stevenson resolved to use the classic plan of permanent temptation.

"All right, it is understood! I offer you \$30,000, with \$10,000 cash, the balance payable in four annual instalments. That is my last price. When you have decided, call on my Notary; he has full authority. You have my card."

They took the path for the motor-car. Stevenson walked first, with his thumbs hooked in the armholes of his waistcoat. The Notary lingered a moment to draw near to

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Felix. Secretly he took his hand, pressing it warmly, and said quite low:

"I quite approve! Stick to it! Don't give way!"

* * *

Three years passed away, during which death was busy at the Delage fireside. And the traitor chose his strokes well! First it was Joseph, the eldest of the sons, who fell torn by the teeth of the reaping machine. A week of horror, of which they avoid speaking at the house! And now it is Basile, the only capable man who remains, there he is, in the large room, down with pneumonia, and drifting slowly but surely to death.

The women go and come silently. The children, gathered round one of their aunts, are saying their beads. From time to time, the father goes near the sick man, and says a few words, strange words, which have no bearing on the situation, the only words that great grief can utter.

The father Delage has greatly changed. An unknown complaint, an old man's trouble,

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affects his heart. He does not do any more work. It is with difficulty that he can walk with slow steps to the end of the pasture. His life is restricted, confined. It is perceptibly tending towards its centre, towards the earth which will soon give it welcome. And this last affliction is going to be more than he can bear. He recalls them all, all his griefs, the oldest ones first, while he is warming his chilly feet before the stove. In a corner of his aged heart, always in mourning, he re-awakens the memory of his wife, found dead one morning at his side. He sees himself as it were yesterday, coming out of his room to tell the children that they are motherless. Then, it was Hermenegilde's leaving for the community of the Christian Brothers' Schools. One year later, and the door of the old house opens to let Marie Angèle through to wear the grey robe of Charity for the rest of her life. And then, it is the horrible tragedy of last summer, the blood-stained mowing-machine in the field, and that mass of mangled flesh lying on the double-bed, just over there!

Now, his youngest son is going to leave

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him, too: both the priest and the doctor give no hope for Basile.

It is finished! Ah! God is just, no doubt, but to us his justice is often very obscure! Why does he seem bent on ruining a family which has always served Him in all sincerity of heart?

Felix rises and goes out on the verandah. The sky is grey, and a soft moist snow is falling, as though in regret, on the wide deserted fields. The edges of the clods on the ploughed ground are already silvered with snow. The earth, the earth also, is dying, and for the one and the other the compassionate skies are weaving a shroud.

* * *

The Spring has come again, and with it the joy of the warm sun, the great floods of sap in the buds, and, at the roots of the plants, the thrilling renewal of life.

Felix Delage has grown more feeble. No longer is anything heard in the house but the quiet footfalls of the women, and the prattle of Basile's orphans, Alfred and Joseph. For want of workers, the land, the good Delage

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farm, for the first time in two hundred years, is going to lie fallow. The furrows opened up by Basile will not be closed. Forbidden weeds are going to take their revenge, and soon there will be nothing on these beautiful fields but wild mustard, foul weeds and chicory, in the place of waving oats and golden wheat.

One only resource, unhappily! Auction the rolling stock, put up the land for sale, and go away to the village of Longueuil with those others, the traitors!

The supreme trial, coming from the hand of God.

This morning sees the final farewell. On the grey stone gable the dew is weeping over these sad words: "Farm For Sale." Already the doors of the buildings are chained, the windows fastened up. After the death of people, the death of things! No more lowing of cattle, no more clucking of poultry! Perhaps because he has not heard the accustomed call of chanticleer, the sun stays hidden behind a heavy bank of clouds. The waggon, already hitched, is waiting before the door, the bulk of the furniture has left, and tomorrow

THE OLD FARM NOT FOR SALE

some hired man will come to gather up the last remnants, some chairs, the lamp, and the old ancestral bed, which will be the last thing to leave the house.

This departure is an agony to the aged Felix. He wanders aimlessly in front of the door, listening for the last time to the murmur of the wind in the big willow, while his daughters and the two children close the shutters. He is wearing this morning his overcoat of homespun and his black felt. He looks at everything everywhere, gazes at the arbour where the vine is renewing its green, at the old grindstone which used to make the scythes shine, and which no one wanted, at the octagonal barn, at all those things which he will see no more, which he no longer wants to see.

Basile's widow is already in the waggon. With quicker step the man walks towards the end of the yard and throws a lingering look over the fields which stretch away in close order towards Gentilly, over at the two large strawstacks in the distance, at the Bois du Lac, where the group of big black pines stands out so prominently.

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It is all done with! It has vanished, the simple and clinging dream of identifying himself with his native soil, of being himself rooted in it for ever. And at that moment, his sight is confused, he seems to see the former Delages grouped near him; his ancestor, the Cavalry officer, whose pistols and sabre he has: Jean, the ancestor whose aquiline profile and everlasting leathern apron haunt his far-off memories: Alexis, his father, who, coming home from the fields used always to sing the old love-song, brought, no doubt, from France under the Officer's saddle:

See the rosy morn is breaking
Hark! the voice of love awaking!

Overcome with all these recollections, the aged Delage leans against the fence and weeps. His stout chest heaves with emotions long restrained, and abundant tears flow from his dear old eyes. Around him, the birds are singing gladly, the unfeeling earth is smiling, as she sometimes does in cemeteries, when children see their mother's body lowered into the grave.

All at once, Felix felt some one tugging

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at his coat. He turned round. Alfred and Joseph were there, also in tears, and watching their grandfather weep. Another moment, and all three were quiet, then Alfred, taking the old man's hand, said to him:

"Grandpa, we have something to ask you."

"What is it, my little boys?"

"When we are older, we want to work the farm . . . like papa and you! Ah! Grandpa, won't you? Don't sell the farm!"

For a moment, Felix stood stupefied. The little ones had understood him, they had guessed. At the last moment, the love of the land, which is in the Delage blood, had awakened in them, and was speaking! The torch, at the point of extinction, rekindled of itself in the fine breeze coming from over the fields, the sealed fountain was beginning to flow. . .

Without taking the trouble to wipe away the tears, which no longer expressed his feelings, the old man, drawing his two grandsons to him, silently kissed them. Then, with firm steps, he went back towards the house, seized a pole, and tore down the placard, "Farm For

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Sale," which disappeared with a dull sound among the high stalks of Saint John's wort.

* * *

And that is why there is an abandoned farm on the Chambly Road, not very far from Longueuil, an abandoned farm which is "*Not for Sale.*"

The Cordwood Donation Bee



"The carriage slid along behind the steady trot of the mare."

The Cordwood Donation Bee



YOUR old Professor, rubbing his glasses with the corner of his handkerchief, had said, "If you are very attentive to this lesson, I will tell you a story!" Looking at the clock we straightened up, determined to hear the story, even though we had to listen to the lesson in order to get it! A little wrinkle appeared between our slightly frowning eyebrows, the wrinkle of attention, so funny and so fleeting on a young forehead! And for a whole hour we heard him speak of the Marquis of Montcalm, of the detested Intendant Bigot, of the dark day of the Plains, and of the flashes of glory at Carillon and Saint Foye. He truly reached the height of eloquence that day, did our dear Professor, when he drew us the picture of that last French evening at Saint Helen's Island, with the Chevalier de Levis,

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leaning against a century-old elm and gazing with stony eyes at the last of the lilies of France burning in the reddened brazier, while round about him, in the deepening night, the old grenadiers of Royal-Roussillon were weeping over their white baldricks!

It was so fine that we were almost forgetting about the promised story. But when, after looking at the time and coughing to clear his voice, the narrator spoke of taking up certain deductions which are to be drawn from one of the theorems of Pythagoras, there was a general strike! The larger boys whistled, while the younger ones used rulers, feet and desk-covers in the common cause. Ah, dear Brother! In spite of your fifty years and your white neck-band—and perhaps because of it—you are fond of mischief all the same! From above your spectacles you were looking on all this uproar with a satisfied air, and I really believe, God forgive me! that you were leading up to it all. However that may be, the divine Pythagoras was on that day sent home, relegated to the Greek calends, and here, as nearly as possible, lacking of course, the vivid colouring, is the story that was told us.

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The former curé of Saint Jerome, Father Labelle, is certainly one of the most extraordinary men whom our country has produced. Has not a French traveller ventured to write that the three most remarkable things in Canada, are the people's faith, the Falls of Niagara and—Curé Labelle!

"The "King of the North," as he was jestingly called, was a colossus in stature, the stoutness of his build set off by the head of an idealist. To moral tone, he added an almost maternal goodness, for which he was idolized, and a strength so sure of itself that it made him a power. We know what his work was. He opened up the mysterious region of the North to French-Canadian colonization, he checked the wave of emigration from this side, which was threatening to dry up the veins of the Laurentian territory, and, as his good friend Arthur Buies has well said, he had the skill to picture on the hearts of the humblest, the concrete image of their motherland, that indefinable impulse which carried them forward in their development. This, indeed, may have been no more than guiding that mysterious instinct inborn in the French

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of having a mission to fulfill on the Continent of America.

Well, at that time, in 1872, Saint Jerome, which had possessed its "Curé" for only four years, was still in its swaddling-clothes. About a hundred houses were stretched in one single street along the bank of North River. Then, as now, huge maples, respected by the first settlers, formed an impenetrable canopy above the roadway. A little higher up, the dwellings were more scattered, and the street, continued by the concession road, began to climb the first ascent of the endless Laurentides. But already the valiant apostle was bending to his work, was exploring those wild domains, was foreseeing their future possibilities, and under that broad and resolute forehead, was planning night and day the Northern railroad, the one factor which would bring a value to this immense territory.

It was the night before Christmas. The midnight mass in the little church at Saint Jerome was ended. The low doors were sending forth on the slippery steps the groups of habitants in overcoats of homespun cloth, women wrapped up in heavy shawls, and chil-

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dren rather stupefied by the unaccustomed hour, the light, and the old carols.

Jacques Maillé had drawn up his carriage near the snow-bank on the other side of the road, and while arranging his fur sleigh-robe, was puffing hard at his pipe. An old woman drew near, holding a large prayer-book in her wrinkled hand, and with her arm supported by a stout lad of twenty.

"Give me your book, Ma'am," said the young man, "put on your mittens and wrap yourself up well! It is a black frost, and River Gagnon is not next door!"

"Thanks very much, my dear Joseph, and good wishes for all at home."

The carriage slid along behind the steady trot of the black mare, who crossed the bridge, turned to the right, followed for a minute the bank of the river, and then took the road for Milles Isles. The College and the Cemetery had then no existence, and the road, a simple trail through the forest, climbed up between the close lines of dark fir-trees.

That night it was not snowing, but the snow of the night before lay everywhere. It decked the outstretched fingers of the spruce

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branches with layers of cotton-floss, it softened the sadness of the "travelling" boulders, it paved the clearings in the forest with marble. It was still the good white snow which crunched under the runners of the sleigh, and which also was born in the breath of the mare, and blown back to fasten itself in tiny stars on the woman's black shawl.

The hill became steeper, and the mare slowed down to a walk.

"So, Jacques, our Curé is organizing his great 'Bee' for the day after tomorrow?"

"Yes, Aurelie, it looks to me as if there will be a big attendance."

"What about you?"

"About me? Oh, I am old, older than the others. But it is for charity, you see. There are so many poor people in the city. You have heard that they are selling cord-wood at twelve dollars just now in Montreal. The poor are going to die of cold, surely! But then, you understand, we are not children, we know well enough that the Curé is going to profit by this to get ahead with his railroad business. He is a pretty smart man, our

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Curé, and I say he is going to have that railway of his."

"Have you any wood cut?"

"I have three cords of fine maple in the shed. I have plenty of time to fill the other shed before sugaring. And besides," continued he, with hesitation, "since our misfortune, I feel myself failing a little, and it may be perhaps my last charity, Aurelie!"

At this word, "misfortune" there fell a silence between the two, filled with sad remembrance. Jacques looked up at the stars which were shining brightly in the narrow width of dark velvet between the stiff points of the spruce trees. Aurelie closed her eyes, and saw again the scene of that winter evening which had wrecked the happiness of their home. Arthur, their only son, had informed his father, between the soup and the pancakes, of his wish to go and work in the city, where money can be made, and where, he added bitterly, it is livelier than away back in the woods! The old settler, pioneer of Rivière Gagnon, who was counting on leaving his son his acres and the fruits of his toil

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during the best years of his life, then got into a terrible rage. The mother's timid intervention was found ineffective against these two strong wills straining against each other like the rafters of a barn. Words were said which opened up an abyss between father and son, and the quarrel ended as such quarrels always end!

Arthur had left the table, hastily gathered up his well-worn clothes, bound on his snowshoes, and, without saying another word, without kissing her, his own mother, without even looking back, had fled in the direction of Saint Jerome.

In the morning, the earth counted one child the less, all trace of whom the snow had silently blotted out. Since that unhappy day, no one in all that spacious countryside had ever heard one word of Arthur, son of Jacques Maillé, of Rivière Gagnon. At the burning memory called up in this beautiful Christmas night, when the rosy cherub's were floating through the pure air to carry over the woods and mountains and lakes, and even down beneath the roof of the poorest peasant's hut, the promised peace of goodwill to men, tears

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flowed from the poor motherly eyes, and caught by the intense cold, froze in the hollows of those wrinkles, whose courses they knew so well. Weighed down by their sorrow, neither of the old people said another word, and that night, there was no Christmas midnight supper in the home of Jacques Maillé of Rivière Gagnon.

At Saint Jerome, the 28th of December, 1872, is still remembered. Since the previous evening, sleighs loaded with maple had begun to pour in from everywhere. People from some distance North, from Ste. Marguerite, Ste. Adèle and St. Sauveur were the first to arrive. And soon all around the church, there was a forest of sleigh-shafts pointing towards the moon. At the presbytery, a great racket! The peasants, grouped round an immense spittoon, were discoursing noisily in the pungent smoke. Standing up near the chimney, the palm of his hand supporting the bowl of a long curving pipe, Curé Labelle was smiling at these rough men, hard of visage and loud of voice, all of them inspired and sustained by his great idea. It was his family, for whom he had sacrificed his own family joys; he was

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their King, who would lead them, axe on shoulder, to the end of the world.

"Boys," he said, puffing thick clouds of smoke to the ceiling, "Boys," he repeated, "Clear the land! Do nothing but work the land, and put away all those fopperies which lead to your dying with a beggar's pouch on your back."

* * *

Next day, it was splendid weather, but cold enough to split stones. About seven o'clock, there were more than two hundred rigs drawn up on the road, before the church, and in the yards near the dwellings. The horses, with red pompons on their blinkers, were nosing their straw, and their nostrils were steaming in the icy air. With tuques pulled down to their eyes, the men were stamping about, to keep warm, around the racks of the sleighs loaded with maple cordwood. On the old-silver-colored bark, on the starred white cuttings of the wood, little ice-pearls were forming, lit up, momentarily, by flashes from the sun.

Suddenly, the church bell broke forth, pealing with all its force, shaking out its joy into

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the pure air ; at this moment, capped and over-coated, his pipe between his teeth, Curé Labelle appeared between his churchwardens at the door of the presbytery. The men saluted with a vigorous "hurrah," jumped on their loads, gathered up the reins, and the tinkling of the sleigh-bells answered the deep-toned Godspeed pealing from the steeple.

The Curé took his seat beside his friend Jules Edouard Prévost, on an enormous load drawn by four white horses. On the pile of wood, in huge capitals on a strip of cotton were these words, "The Northern Colonists." Whips cracked, and amid calls and cries the caravan moved out. Jacques Maillé, the only old man in all the "Bee," followed the Curé, driving his black mare, who alone, a thing that was noticed, carried no pompons! The men of the choir next took up the song, led by Pierre Legault, the organ choir-leader, who chanted in a loud voice

"C'est la belle Française!"

Grouped according to districts, the settlers followed, seated on their horseblankets folded in four, and well wrapped up in their over-

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coats of homespun with their habitant sashes, and letting their legs hang down clad in long stockings and beef moccasins.

For a long time the women followed with their eyes the long procession going down towards Saint Thérèse, a huge black caterpillar crawling slowly over the white plain.

It is a good thirty-two miles from Saint Jerome to Montreal, but the ground is fairly level, and there are many short-cuts well marked out. It passes immediately into a wilderness destroyed by fire, and as level as a lake. On this December day, the recent snow had dressed the edges of the blackened trunks with ermine, and the bald stumps wore caps of dazzling white. Fresh tracks crossed the road, and the young men, pointing out the dark border of the woods towards Mascouche, remarked, "See where the deer have passed along this way!"

Saint Thérèse, Saint Rose, Saint Martin, and Bord à Plouffe saw, each in its turn the "Maple Bee" passing. Holiday-making was everywhere, and fresh sleighs came stringing on behind. At last, about five o'clock, the "Northern Colonists" made their entry into

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Montreal by way of Saint Lawrence Main Street. Street lamps were being lit, and the stopping of work was beginning to fill the street. A dense crowd, swelled by an escort of youngsters, soon gathered on both sides.

A curious spectacle indeed were these sturdy yeoman, whose moustaches were made arctic by little icicles, these horses white with hoarfrost, this gay symphony of sleigh-bells, which were saying in their own way, "Let the poor come along, here is firewood! Come on, poor people, here is warmth!"

The leading sleigh in particular, drew attention, and the "King of the North," as happy as the hero of a triumph in Rome, received the applause and salutations, and gave thanks by waving his whip. They came to a stop on the Champ de Mars, and Curé Labelle addressed the Mayor and Aldermen, who had met to receive the deputation of Northern Colonists. His dear big boys were crowding behind him, and he pleaded magnificently the cause of these pioneers of the race, whom we must not abandon, because the best blood of our country runs in their veins.

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In their behalf there must be furnished the means of communication with their brethren, for them, in short, he wanted the Northern Railway built. These men, the Colonists, did not forget their less fortunate brethren, and in consideration of the distress which the premature close of navigation had brought upon the poor of Montreal, Curé Labelle was proud to donate two hundred sleigh-loads of firewood for the purposes of charity!

It was a great day for the destitute! Every Colonist got a ticket bearing the address of an indigent family, and they dispersed in the midst of cries, questionings and the jingle of the ringing sleighbells.

Jacques Maillé scarcely knew the city, having visited it only once in his life. So he had a little street urchin get up beside him, who was drawn thither by curiosity, and was quite proud to hang on to a habitant's sleigh without risking a cut from the whip.

The sleigh filed along Notre Dame Street, and took the direction of the Quebec Ward, carefully passing amongst loaded lorries and horse-cars. The little black mare was always pricking up her ears in the midst of this bustle

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and so many things new to her, but she was a brave beast, not too shy, and made good headway. Directed by the little boy, Jacques turned up Shaw Street, now called Dorion, and after some going, turned into a dark and narrow lane. It must be here! The old man struck a match and was told the number by his young guide, who, for the first time, felt some pride in his rudimentary learning. He at last stopped before a little, tumble-down house, or shack, rather, sheeted with rusty iron, and through the roof of which passed a length of stove-pipe devoid of smoke. Through the only window, from which panes of glass were missing, struggled a pale ray of light, where the snow-flakes, now beginning to fall, were whirling. So as to have his hands free to unload, Jacques tied his whip to his sash, raised the edge of his tuque and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice from within.

He pushed down the iron latch, and, as the door opened, Jacques, struck by the sudden appearance of such misery, uncovered, and stood dumb. Wrapped up in a poor cloak, with her head protected by a shawl, a young

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woman, seated on a box—there were no chairs—was holding against her breast a bundle of rags, in which a baby's head was dimly outlined. A child of two or three years, as tragic as cold and hunger itself, all the youth of its little face crushed out by suffering, had sheltered itself behind her at the entrance of the stranger. No fire in the little stove, and no trace of wood anywhere. On a cord stretched in a corner some baby-linen was hanging, stiff and frozen. Black misery!

The old man's heart was wrung. In the Northern forest, want is something as unknown as riches. They work hard against the land and the stumps, the winter wind is terrible and rocks the houses as though they were about to fall, but there is always a good fire in the stove, and in the cupboard a bit of bread!

"Madame," said he to the woman, who stood up in surprise, "I am a Northern Colonist, and have been told to throw down my load of maple here."

"But," replied she, "what is the meaning of this?"

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"Oh, yes, you have not bought any, is that it? I understand," he added, throwing a sad look around him. "But it is just this way. We are poor ourselves, we settlers in the North, but we don't have to go without anything that is necessary, and I, for one, have been wishing this year that those who are not so well-off as I am, should know, on New Year's Day, what kind of wood old Jacques Maillé of Rivière Gagnon warms himself with."

And, proud of his *bon mot*, the old man's face cleared up in a cheery smile, which was like a flower forgotten by the autumn in a withered garden.

At these last words, the woman, turning very pale, had made one step forward, and was opening her mouth to speak, when the door gave way to a tall, thin man, whose dark eyes were burning under black eyebrows. His faded, shapeless cap, his ragged coat, his worn-out shoes, proclaimed him the occupant of this wretched hovel.

Recognizing this new arrival,—how could he fail to recognize him?—Jacques Maillé had stepped back. It was Arthur, his own Arthur, but how changed and aged by misery! One

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minute, father and son observed each other, while the young woman, frightened, retreated towards the poor bed, in a corner, and clasped her baby more closely to her breast.

At that very hour, the lamp had just been lit in the little dwelling at Rivière Gagnon, and, kneeling before the image of the Holy Family, behind which the blest palm was placed, half bathed in the yellow light streaming down from the lamp-shade, the old mother was praying, her whole spirit reaching out towards Him who consoles, and pardons, and restores. The flame in the stove sent forth flashes on the opposite wall, the wind was swaying the timbers of the loft, so that the inner self of the old house seemed likewise to quiver in asking for the return of the prodigal son. Outside, intense solitude overspread the land, a deep silence reigned in the snow-covered woods; but the firmament, all spangled with stars, arched like the dome of a church over that small dwelling where a soul, with invincible faith, was importunately striving with God! And because the lowly, those who have listened every hour of their lives to the divine voice of Nature, have some direct

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method of prayer of which we have no knowledge, God, who is especially the God of the humble, at last gave ear to that mother's prayer.

Far away, in the throbbing city, where work alone finds respite, but where vice and misery are busy through the hours of the dark, father and son were face to face with one another, obdurate in their pride and their remembrance of the past. Jacques hesitated between the ancient anger, which rose again in his heart like an evil leaven, and his love, ancient also, for the flesh of his flesh! Would he turn away in disgust from the renegade of the farm, or would the heart of a father and the faith of a Christian force him to grant a pardon?

In the hour of family trial, the little child remains the supreme resource. His pure brow is the neutral ground where, with a kiss, all hatreds can be blown away. Jacques felt this. He swiftly lifted the little boy into his arms, who had been too much taken by surprise to follow his mother, kissed him, trembling, and whispered, "Kiss your grandfather." Then in a low voice, in which remained no

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trace of pride, but showing only pity and love, he added, as though he were dealing with something quite simple and arranged beforehand: "Well, Arthur, it is understood you are coming back home!"

Misery and disillusion are terrible solvents of human pride. Arthur was not bad at heart. Yielding to an impulse of young blood, he had broken away from his home, but had held aloof from that corruption of the large city, which too often assails the country boy, and infects him, even to the marrow. He knew at the bottom of his heart that God had punished him. The destruction of his small dwelling by fire, then the typhoid fever, which wiped out all his means and brought him within a handsbreadth of death, all these accumulated ills were a chastisement—he felt it—for the insult thrown in his father's face. At this unexpected turn of affairs, before that father who was humbling himself by taking the first step towards him through the medium of his child, he carried his hands to his eyes. A flood of tears, released like the river bursting its banks, overflowed suddenly, and he fell to his knees, murmuring,

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"Forgive me, father, forgive me!"

A quarter of an hour after, the baby was asleep in its grandfather's overcoat, and before a good maplewood fire an old man was holding a child on his knee, and saying to a young man and a young woman, both weeping before him:

"It is the old mother that is going to be glad when she sees us turning the corner of the road."

When the caravan left Montreal on the morning of the next day, the black mare was decked out with red pompons, and the people of Saint Jerome were shortly after whispering to each other, when pointing out the young woman comfortably seated with two children behind two men in the sleigh:

"That is old Jacques Maillé, you know he has dug up that lost boy of his."

The Pioneer of Temiskaming



"Here the forest crowds in more closely about the modest clearings."

The Pioneer of Temiskaming



O, you are leaving us today, my good Jean Baptiste?"

"Yes, I must go, monsieur le Curé, I have nothing left to me any longer in Saint Hilaire."

"Poor Jean Baptiste!"

"Yes, true enough, I am in a bad way. A single man can always recover himself. But with seven children it is not very cheerful to go and begin all over again, and without any hundred dollars in one's pocket!"

"Then your brother was hard with you up to the last?"

"Up to the very end! He did not even let me take the sleigh, my own sleigh, to go to the station. Pierre Larivée is taking us there. It is hard, Monsieur le Curé, to have worked for nothing, for fifteen years of my life! I trust that God will pardon Honoré, but acting in that way will not bring him any luck."

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A tear glistened in the deepset eyes of the old priest. With trembling hand he placed his breviary on the desk.

"Jean Baptiste, I will not forget you, I will pray for you and God will help you, for you have always been an honest man and a good Christian. A good conscience is worth more than much money; it is the best riches! Bear this great trial bravely, and never lose trust in Providence!"

Grasping the hand of his parishioner, the priest slipped some ten dollar notes into it.

"Take this, Jean Baptiste. In the days of your prosperity, you used to come cheerfully to pay me your tithes, and the best apples of your orchard were always for me! Today you are in distress, and I want to do my part in helping you. And now," he added, putting on his cap, "I shall not let your family go away without my blessing."

Together, they then went out of the presbytery. Beside the boardwalk a box sleigh, painted blue, was standing, filled with little heads smothered in the robes, and, in the middle, the mother, looking thin and pale in her grey cloak.

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The good priest spoke some kind words to the mother, then the little ones all knelt down as best they could, to receive the old man's blessing, his words rising clear and soft with his breathing in the cold January air. One last handclasp. The sleigh-bells tinkled, and the sleigh went away, leaving two shining tracks in the hard snow. For a long minute the priest followed with sad eyes the conveyance which was bearing Jean Baptiste Levesque and his family away from Saint Hilaire. Then, with slow steps, he re-entered, reviewing in his mind the circumstances of this sad exodus.

Many miseries, alas! poison life in this wicked world, but in this case, truly, the cup was overflowing.

Jean-Baptiste had for fifteen years been cultivating the Levesque property in the Fortieth Range, just at the foot of the Beloeil Mountain. His father, an old man, for a long time a complete invalid, had lived with him. Jean-Baptiste took devoted care of him, while doing his best to bring a value to the gravelly soil of his farm and to the fine orchard, the produce of which brought in the bulk of his

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income. Notwithstanding the absence of notarial documents, Jean-Baptiste was to all intents the true proprietor, because the elder, Honoré, after a quarrel with his father, had taken his departure for the States. No one had heard a word of him until the time when the old man was gradually sinking, then the fugitive returned, very much changed, to take his seat at the Levesque fireside. He was greeted by all the family with the gracious tact of true charity, without any question, and without any reproach, just as if nothing had happened, as if he had come back from a three-day trip. What followed was one of the most sordid chapters of human trickery, sly scheming to take the waning faculties of the old man by surprise; the well-timed arrival of some Notary brought from Montreal during the absence of Jean-Baptiste, to have the sick man sign a complete testament in favor of the elder brother. The father having died and the will having been opened, Honoré had given his brother eight days to pack off with what he, the bachelor, called "his band of dirty brats!"

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A colonizing missionary knew of this case of hardship, and proffered his influence to secure for the ejected man means of transport and a good lot in the new lands.

So that is why poor Levesque departed for ever from Saint Hilaire on this winter morning, from his mountain, and his orchard, from the slope of the pasture where the Spring would sow the scarlet bells of the columbine, and from which, with the coming of summer, one might see the deep Richelieu rolling its silver stream through the checkered fields, and the twin Churches of Saint Hilaire and Beloeil, face to face, and so much alike, viewing each other untiringly in the same mirror! These were the images which Jean-Baptiste carried away, engraved on his memory, into the distant North, whither he was going in sadness, but with resolution, to seek bread for his seven children.

* * *

The road which leads from Ville Marie on Lake Temiskaming, towards the Quinze Lake, crosses a magnificent but rather rough region, an agricultural land where the soil is

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rich with clay and the vegetable mould of centuries, where the forest ceaselessly alternates with beautiful green fields. Here and there, brand-new villages cluster around their little wooden churches, having simple steeples where at the hours of the Angelus, the clear voices of the bells sing out, steeped in the glory of their recent baptism. Beyond the gentle curve of the valley where Lorrainville groups its rich lands and its neat cottages, comes the plateau of Saint Isidore, then Mount Carmel. Here the forest crowds in more closely about the modest clearings and here evidently are the outposts of the grand army of the Colonists, who are breaking irresistibly into the domain of the woodsman and the hunter.

On a beautiful evening at the end of June, a waggon rolled at an easy gait between the fields sprinkled with stumps and with rocks newly uncovered by fire. Beside a white-haired priest, an Oblat Father, whose large crucifix glittered intermittently, was driving the conveyance.

The road had been long, and they were not conversing, but were watching the sun sink-

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ing behind the blackened trunks which broke the horizon. On either side, at the foot of the glossy willows, all the lush vegetation of late Spring was breaking out in leaf and flower, setting off the yellow of the marigolds against the tender pink of the sweet briar, sending out their shoots right under the feet of the horses, who were silently scattering the grey sand of the road behind them. No more real houses gay with color, no more dormered roofs, no more pillared verandahs but only shanties of timber, built with no other tool than the axe, simple structures made of logs squared on two sides only, and dovetailed at the corners.

"We are getting near, Monsieur le Curé."

"So much the better, Father, I am longing to shake hands with that poor Jean-Baptiste. You don't know him personally?"

"No, Monsieur le Curé."

"He will surprise you at first sight; he is not very good-looking, and, besides, hard work and suffering have left deep marks. But his is a soul of beauty, a soul naturally and simply heroic, a soul such as we seldom see in our ministry. Oh, well, you will see for yourself!"

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The road turned sharply to the right, narrowed into a grassy lane running on the upper levels, grazing the stumps, and descending squarely into the bed of the streams. At the top of a rather steep hill, the view spread out suddenly, disclosing a level plateau, shut in on all sides by steep cliffs, stripped and whitened by the bush fires. The Father, bringing his horses to a stop, stretched out his hand, with "There it is!"

Beyond the half-burnt trunks of trees, still standing, there were to be seen, all lonely, as far as the view extended, the house and barn of Levesque the Colonist. The six o'clock sun was sharpening parts of the woodwork with its light, flaming the one little square window framed in the bevelling of the logs, and playing on the milkcan and kettle placed bottom-up on their pickets. Everything in the neighborhood spoke of death and of hope, of ruin and of conquest. Ten paces off, stumps, further away, more stumps, hacked and charred, yet clamped firmly to the ground, the last effort of a nature time-defying, but condemned, and which yet refused to die!

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After descending a deep gully at a brisk trot, and climbing its other side, the waggon turned to the right and stopped before the humble dwelling.

"This is where Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Levesque lives?" said the Father, jumping to the ground.

"Yes, Father," replied a woman, appearing at that moment in the doorway, with a baby in her arms—"Why, it is the Curé of Saint Hilaire! Well, this is indeed a welcome visit."

She who had just spoken was a remarkable type of true Canadian womanhood; eyes bright and deep, expression animated, neat and full braids of a beautiful brown framing the glowing brow, and brought round to form a neat and compact knot at the back. Cheek-bones somewhat prominent, the hollows of her cheeks and some wrinkles telling of the trials of brave maternity.

The old priest had already climbed down. One by one, the children came out and surrounded him, bashful but happy. All that little group, ten of them, fully counted, were marvellously neatly dressed. A remarkable

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thing, in this hidden corner of Temiskaming, where nobody passes by, at this late hour of the day, and in these surroundings of charred and fallen trees. Some of them wore shoes; others showed without shame pretty little white feet, which, indeed, needed no apology. All of them had their hair neatly combed. One could not help feeling that in their penury these poor people allowed themselves, and for themselves, the cheap luxury of an exquisite cleanliness.

The woman, with emotion, presented her children to the priest, who remembered them one by one, while the Oblat Father, assisted by the little boys, unhitched his horses.

"How do you like my big girls?" continued the mother. "Marie is twelve, just now, and she is as good as a woman to me. And then, Ernestine, and Philomene? My little Blanche, do you remember her? She is my little Nun, that one. When we have finished our prayers, she always keeps on after the others. But perhaps that is hypocrisy," she added with a smile, which quite contradicted her words.

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"Oh, no! No one is a hypocrite at that age," interrupted a little old woman who appeared just now at the door. Her face, very much wrinkled, was hidden in a black cap, and she was holding in her arms a baby of a year old, who was sucking his finger.

"This is my mother," explained Madame Levesque. "She came to help me, when this baby came," (the mother was showing the baby in her arms) "which the Good Lord sent to us three weeks ago."

There were two other children, a little blonde with bobbed hair, and another, whose black eyes seemed shadowed with a melancholy quite unusual at that age. The first wore a combination of plain ticking, the other was dressed in black.

"These two here, I don't know them."

"You baptised them, Monsieur le Curé. They were born down there, but they were babies when we left. The fair one's name is Julien, the dark one is John. It is allowable to love him more than the others, poor little chap; he was sick so long that he has remained delicate."

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The child, in fact, had a club-foot. The Curé took him up in his arms, and as he kissed him, he remembered an affecting page, read during his quiet hours in his presbytery, where Dickens tells of Tiny Tim, a little cripple like this child, and of his wholesome and blessed influence in the home of the Cratchits. He reflected that on all the branches of the tree of humanity, even on those richest in sap, there are buds which never open out, lives crippled from the very germ, afflicted beings whom God has placed there each like a living crucifix calling to mind the great law of the Expiation, and spreading the virtue of love and charity.

The priest still had little Jean in his arms when Levesque and his son appeared at the corner of the barn. They joined the Oblat who was returning from the stable, and the three walked towards the house. From a distance, the colonist had recognized the priest. Without either hesitation or haste, having struck his axe into a stump, he raised his cap and came to shake hands with his former Curé. Levesque wore trousers of nondescript color, which were hidden at the knees

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by long "beef moccasins" held in place by leather laces. His brown shirt was worn, and blackened with charcoal, a shapeless and dusty cap protected his eyes. A thin, blond beard of a week's growth partly covered his face, a thin face, which the flies, the horrible black flies had attacked, puffing his eyelids, and swelling his chin and neck. A rather noticeable twist in his neck still further accented, if that were possible, the air of distress worn by his troubled face.

The Curé shuddered involuntarily.

"My good Jean-Baptiste, I am very glad to find you again after two years. Do you know I have come to have supper with you?"

"You will have a poor supper, Sir, but it is offered with all my heart. I am very glad to be able to thank you for your kindness to my family."

The mother, the grandmother and little Marie were already busying themselves to meet the unexpected situation, to find something to eat for the two clergymen.

"Say no more about that, Jean-Baptiste," continued the old man. "How are you getting along in Temiskaming?"

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"Not rich as yet, as you may see. But the good Lord has helped us, and the children always get their three meals a day."

And the Colonist, happy to be able to lay bare his troubles to a friendly heart, began to tell his story, always the same old story, of the defeated ones who go away to begin life afresh in some new colony.

"When I left Saint Hilaire, you told me you would think of me. I see now you have thought of me to some purpose."

"That goes without saying. And the proof that I have not forgotten you, is that here I am. Have you a good property?"

"A good piece of ground. I ought to say two pieces, since the Curé of Mont Carmel let me have another one for my Joseph. It is a good stout little b'oy that I have, you know. He works with me in the burnt woods all day long, and in the evening, after supper, he takes his axe and goes off to his own lot. When I tell him that that is too much work for a child of fourteen, do you know what he tells me? 'It must be done.'"

Watching Joseph, who, bent over a basin on the doorsteps, was busily washing his face and

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hands, the Curé pondered the depth of the boy's saying, "It must be done." Oh! the hidden force, nameless, but irresistible, which pushes forward these French of the continent of America. The forest must retreat, so that the race may advance. New furrows must open in the fastnesses of the North, for it becomes confined in the old parishes and near the cities. "It must be done!" Yes, so that the pure simplicity of morals vanish not away! So that the Canadian soul may lose not its persistence. So that for a century, for two, or three centuries, and for ever, the steeples may still sing in French under the Laurentian sky!

Standing on tiptoe, a little girl came to speak a word in her father's ear. The Curé noticed that she also had been bitten by the black flies.

"You suffer a good deal from the flies?"

"Yes, awfully, Sir," said Jean Baptiste, "especially just at this time. We are in a great hurry for the very warm weather to kill them. But until then they are dreadful."

While speaking, he held his little girl close to him, and his eyes scanned the skyline of

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hills which blocked his view, the edge of the forest of spruce trees, the great heaps of muddy stumps, piled up with roots in the air. At that hour of the day the flies fluttering in millions above the clumps of alder and red-heart were not to be seen, but were to be imagined lurking everywhere in ambush; in the fissures of the bark, on the dark heads of the bulrushes, on the underside of every leaf, on every blade of grass, and even in the blue bells of the pretty cornflower! After a silence, the colonist, still holding the little girl's arm, added, with an unaccustomed brightening in the depth of his soft eyes;

“But, you know,—about the flies—it is the axe that drives them away!”

This simple phrase betrayed the intensity of the love of a father and of the longing of the Colonist straining towards the goal, the clearing, the new land, and bread for the children! It comprised also, evidently without the knowledge of the speaker, one of those felicities of expression, one of those powerful images of which only the common people and the very great poets hold the secret!

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The Oblat, who until now had said nothing, proposed a visit to the buildings. That did not take long. Inside, an old grey horse; outside, a young group, two cows, three heifers, four sheep, two pigs.

"You see," resumed Levesque, coming out of the yard, "It was not very cheerful to begin with, and many times I used to think of our fine lands at Saint Hilaire, and of my beautiful orchard. The first winter, when I was building, I was quite uneasy. We did not sleep much, my wife and I. For that winter, and the one following, I was working for others, for the Klocks, and for Gillies, and the Rior-don Company. When one is poor, you know, he can't be too exacting; I worked without making any price. They gave me what they liked; a dollar, a dollar and a half. The first autumn, I had \$32.00 left. I bought a ton of hay, \$20, two bags of flour, \$8.00 and some oats for two dollars. There was \$2.00 left, to pass the winter, with ten persons.—I don't know how I managed it."

He leant against the birch rail which shut the cattle out of the neighborhood of the

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house. His hand pointed towards the distant houses out of sight.

“The good Lord is just, Monsieur le Curé. I see people, not far from here, who have no children, or who only have two or three. Well, they have been just as hard up as we have.”

The two priests looked at each other; both of them were weeping. Accustomed as they were to all forms of human misery, and to all the secret beauties of unknown and unappreciated souls, this simple faith in Providence surprised them, and this poor Colonist grew in their eyes to the stature of a hero. The Curé of Saint Hilaire saw that it was time to reveal the object of his visit to Levesque.

“You are right, Jean-Baptiste, God is good. You see, if He has afflicted you, and severely, it is yet to be clearly seen that He has not forgotten you. When He fills the cradle, He does not forget to fill the larder, and families like yours do not perish from want. You bore your misfortune courageously; your brother’s injustice to you; all that is written in Heaven. All the same, you must be surprised to see

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me this evening at Mont Carmel, so far from my parish!"

"When I saw you as I was crossing my buckwheat field, I said to myself, 'There is something new at Saint Hilaire.' "

"Yes, there is something new, but not at Saint Hilaire. I am going to read you a letter from the Curé of Fall River, in the United States.

Fall River, Mass., June 8th, 1918.

Reverend Brother,

On Saturday last, Honoré Levesque, one of your old parishioners, died here in my Parish, after having received the sacraments of the Church. I hasten to discharge a duty with which he entrusted me, when I attended him in his last moments.

I do not need to tell you how Honoré Levesque dispossessed his brother of his land at Saint Hilaire; these public facts are well known to you. You know also that the land was sold, and that the said Honoré Levesque went away to the United States. The woman whom he had married on his arrival here, de-

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served him a year afterwards, leaving with him a child, a boy.

Six months afterwards, the unfortunate man contracted pleuro-pneumonia, which carried him off. Before dying, he became reconciled with God, and charged me to seek his brother's pardon, through your intervention. He died encumbered with debts, and there can be no question of restitution.

The child, now in our Saint Joseph's Institute, is entered under the anglicised name of Harry Bishop. The Matron of the Institution wishes to know if any of his relatives will adopt him.

I hope, my dear Brother, that I may count upon your good offices, and may consider my mission as ended. Let us thank the all-pitying God for this return to Himself, and believe me,

Yours devotedly in Christ,

X.... Priest.

Levesque had listened to the reading in the same attitude, leaning against the birch rail which shut out his field. For a moment he

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remained standing silently, then, without yet saying a word, he made a half turn and passed through the low doorway of his house.

The two priests understood, and discreetly walked into the little kitchen-garden. There, as elsewhere, there had been no spare time to dig up all the stumps, and some of them served as centres for the vegetable-beds. The setting sun dressed them in black satin, where the ragged clefts in the charred wood ran in broken lines. The as yet virgin ground was strong and richly fertile, swelling the leaves of the cabbages, the bulb of the onions, and crinkling the heads of the lettuce. In a corner, gaiety in unhappiness, a few common rosebushes, clumps of many-colored pansies, some white petunias—just enough to make a little nosegay for the table on Sunday. The priest felt a touch on his arm. Joseph, the eldest, still in his working-clothes, but nicely combed and washed, came with a call to supper.

They went into the living-room, where the table was spread with great care. The children's room could be seen through the partly opened curtains, and the parents' bedroom,

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where Levesque at this moment was getting ready for supper. A poor interior, but of strict cleanliness. On the stove, a small one for so many people, a pork omelette was frying, near the enamelled teapot. With a pleasant smile, the woman, with apologies for the plainness of the meal, invited the visitors to be seated. While these were saying grace, the children were taking in this rare sight with all their eyes. In the depth of the Temiskaming forest, visitors are few.

While attacking with a sharp appetite the thick slices of home-made bread, and the substantial cuts smothered in the scramble of eggs, the priest was talking, asking questions of the children in turns and of the grandmother seated apart, with little John on her knees. The Oblat Father raised his eyes and attentively examined the wall before him. A Sacred Heart of Jesus, and a Virgin in gilt frames, salvage from the wreckage at Saint Hilaire, a Temperance Cross, and, above the window, among pious little images gained at school, a maple-leaf laboriously cut out of apple-green paper.

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The Maple! Temiskaming is its frontier. With its beautiful frail branches and its tender leaves, so delicate, and veined like a human hand, it does not risk any further North. But in leaving the valley of the great river, the Laurentian people carry it away in their songs and in their hearts. With it they are going to people that incomparable territory of river and lake called the Upper Ottawa, to cross over beyond the height of land and spread down into the immense plain of the Abitibi, which for three centuries has awaited them. And, in the fastnesses of the North, when the Colonist shall have built his house between the silver birches and the quivering aspens, there will always be a place on those log walls, between the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of The Blessed Virgin, always a dear little place for the starry leaf of the Maple.

The Oblat Father, affected, had stopped eating. Now, was there in the mind of these people, solely occupied, we may believe, in not dying of hunger, the instinctive and lofty idea of the mission of the French in America? This Colonist, with nearly all the others, no doubt, was conscious of his tribute to the de-

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velopment of the race, to the faring forward, and forward. This little Maple Leaf in green paper in a cabin away back in Temiskaming, was it not saying all this, and more?

And here the Oblat's eyes, continuing their survey, fell on an object no less curious. He touched his companion's elbow and nodded towards the wall on the right. Hooked to a row of nails, ten strings of beads were hanging, of different patterns, but in good condition, and the cheap crystals were shining like real jewels in the dying rays which streamed through the doorway.

"I see you are always a good Catholic, Mrs. Levesque," exclaimed the priest from Saint Hilaire.

"Ah, yes! Sir, Life would sometimes be hard, indeed, if we had not religion to comfort us. They have each a chaplet," she continued, with change of tone, "even this little one."

She stood up at the same time, with a smile which was full of unsaid words, carrying her three weeks old baby, whose pink face shone against the whiteness of the linen like a peony in a bunch of lilies.

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At this moment, Levesque, opening the curtain, appeared with a hammer in his hand. Without saying a word he went to the wall, and drove a nail at the end of the row, and hung a little pewter chaplet on it. A last golden ray from the sun made the beads sparkle, and gave a nimbus for an instant to the plain face of the man.

“What are you doing there, Jean-Baptiste,” asked the priest, half understanding. “For whom is this eleventh chaplet?”

Levesque came back. In his fine soft eyes was blazing the flame of those who have just conquered. He looked at his wife, who smiled back at him, then he replied, putting back the hammer on the shelf;

“It is for Harry Bishop, Sir!”

* * *

About nine o'clock, having conscientiously emptied their purses into the hands of the astonished Levesque, the two priests descended towards Ville Marie. The sun had disappeared, and the blue of the sky was rapidly fading. The underbrush was peopled with

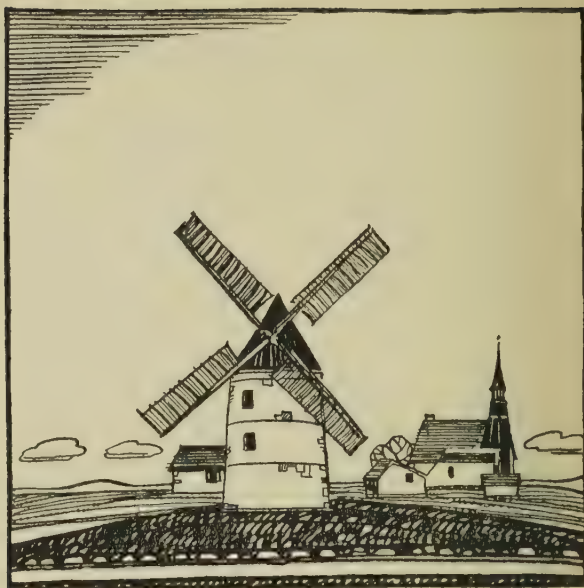
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dark shadows, and in the burnt lands some belated cows were tinkling their bells while hastily snatching their last mouthfuls.

As the horses set out again after a rapid descent, the Curé said to the Oblat Father, who was silently driving the rig ;

“I do not know what your impressions are, Father, but, after what I have seen and heard, as for myself, a priest of the Lord grown grey in the ministry, I very much fear that, beside Levesque, I shall appear before the Judgment Seat a miserable sinner.”

A People Without a History



"I understand that the Verchères fort is always French, and that the shade of little Madeleine sometimes comes back by night to mount guard."

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FOR many a long hour Lord Durham, Imperial High Commissioner, and Governor General of British North America, had been writing at his oaken table. Night had again restored silence to the Castle Haldimand, and only the dull ticking of the tall clock maintained the life of things in the large room devoted to office-work.

On the corner of a table loaded with books and papers, the flickering light from a bronze candelabrum was carving and scattering shadows, giving strange relief to the leopard supporters of the oval crown on the high chimney-piece. The face of the Governor seemed strained by inward effort, in the near light of the candles. His bright intelligent eyes, his firmly closed mouth, the two wrinkles springing from the sides of his nose and curving to each side of his lips, marked the striking

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Byronic expression of this renowned English Minister. On this cool September night he had thrown over his shoulders an ample cloak with a fur collar from which a little chain held by a sapphire was hanging negligently.

Lord Durham suddenly rose and went towards the open window. Once again the incomparable panorama, which from the very first evening, had delighted his artistic soul, took possession of his eyes, released the strain of his brain, relaxed his overtired nerves. The ruins of the Chateau Saint Louis were tragically huddled under his eyes. But for this new comer, for this English peer, the burnt remnants to which the old citizens of Quebec came daily to dream, had no voice. Yet these crumbled walls summed up the brilliant colonial adventure of France in America, its hopes and its agony. But, what did that mean for him? He had been only since last May in a country which was known to him merely in its political features. Entrusted with the mission of study with a view to pacification, he wished to discharge it without being softhearted, and to return to the House of Lords well equipped for his opponents.

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But Nature had bestowed upon this creature of sensibility and passion the gift of influence and conciliation. At this moment the musical periods of Chateaubriand, singing of night in the deserts of the New World, arose, beating their wings in the memory of this man of letters. On the heights of Levis, facing Castle Haldimand, little luminous points, twinkling like eyes, pierced the shadows from distance to distance. The trees of the Fort's garden were invisibly rustling, the sole voice of the night surviving the silencing of the voices of the day. Far away, between the Island of Orleans and the Beaumont side, the moon was rising, opening on the dark waters a long channel of light, which disclosed, by outlining it on the silvery little waves, the course of a belated schooner draped in its sail as in a shroud.

Durham, leaning against the windowsill, with his hand resting on his thick hair, was thinking. How small at this hour and at this distance, seemed England, the Thames, Westminster, Buckingham; how small, how puny, how artificial! This immense roadstead, this

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admirably situated city, what a metropolis for a great people! And this wonderful river, what a royal approach to the heart of a great country! Who knows what the veiled history of the future may hold hidden in its horoscope?

Suddenly, into the shining furrow which cleft the stream, shot a long, narrow boat, passed, and vanished in the shadows, while the south wind bore to the Governor the tag of a song,

Filez ! Filez ! O mon navire !
Car le bonheur m'attend là-bas !

The Governor softly smiled. Through his grand dream he had forgotten that this land was French, and here was the night telling him so, singing it to him! And the inevitable association of ideas brought him back to politics, to the work which he was feverishly elaborating on that oaken table there, just three paces off. Yes! the radical error of having allowed for a whole century this strong Latin race so to take root in this soil, made British by force of arms! There were only two ways of disposing of a conquered people,

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assimilation by force, or complete autonomy under the wise direction of the conqueror. The solution brought to this country was a bastard one, and that was why blood had flowed, and why the jails were filled with honest citizens. We had inoculated them with our virus of liberty and parliamentary representation, why should we be so surprised at the consequences of our policy? Yes, it must be done away with! Since in London they did not wish to grant complete autonomy, we must act with energy, and fuse into one mass these diverse elements, under pain of maintaining here a hotbed of rebellion capable of one day consuming British power on this continent.

Again the voices of the rowers floated up and came ringing in Durham's ears;

Filez ! Filez ! O mon navire !
Car le bonheur m'attend là-bas !

Afterwards nothing was heard but the scraping of a pen, followed in its course over the paper by a triangle of black shadow. Midnight rang out from the great clock.

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Very soon, supporting his head on his left hand, Durham fell asleep.

* * *

Three discreet knocks. The door opened, and on the threshold appeared a waiting-maid. She was young and fresh in her white apron worn over a black waist. She bore on a tray the tea and the light cakes which the Governor took every evening before retiring, after finishing his writing.

The girl stopped. The noble lord looks handsome like this, with his latest thought expressed on his strong features. And yet she senses that this flourishing nobleman, this Knight of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, is the enemy of her race, and that that pen, which has just fallen across the paper there, is a terrible weapon, as powerful as Colborne's torch, which is sharpened against her own people.

Much excited, she lightly places the tray on a round table. The little Canadian, pupil of the Ursulines of Quebec, is not an illiterate. She has read the annals of her country, and received the rich traditions of the old convent

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monastery which keeps as a treasure the very first pages of our history, that history as beautiful as a song, and as pure as childhood! And she has, besides, other good reasons to love her country. Her father, Jean Louis Bedard, was killed at Saint Charles, fighting for what he believed to be the cause of justice and liberty. She had seen her father's house in flames, and it was for that reason that little Thérèse Bedard, daughter of an ancient Richelieu family, came back to the place where she had spent her childhood with the good Nuns, her teachers. The influence of a friend of the Convent had found this situation at the Chateau, where her fine education and distinguished air had gained for her the respect of everyone.

And, suddenly, because these memories completely possessed her brain, a crazy desire came to her to know what these pages scattered on the table were saying. She wanted to know what that broad forehead, on which the flickering flame of the candle was playing in alternate light and shadow, was really thinking of the Canadians, of the rebels of

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yesterday, of the dead and the prisoners of today. She approached from the rear without making any more noise on the hard-wood floor than the rays of the moon. Now she is leaning over, quite close! Her face almost touches that of the noble sleeper, and her breath grazes him! If he should wake up! But, no! he is sleeping soundly, and his shoulders regularly raise the fur of his cloak.

She reads—and suddenly her expressive face contracts and pales. She has just come to the lines where the Governor has dropped his pen. And, nearly at the top of a page, she reads and re-reads these words, traced in an angular and upright hand, indicating pride and scorn: “They are a people without a history.”

One is not for nothing a granddaughter of one of the Light Cavalry of Chateauguay, and daughter of one of the vanquished at Saint Charles. Trembling with anger, Thérèse straightened up, and her tense look swept from the paper where the lying lines were displayed to the white hand alongside, and the aristocrat’s fine fingers, where a diamond shone. She can hardly breathe, this daughter of a patriot, and she thinks at this moment

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that, long ago far up the river, there was a maiden of her blood and of her race, who wrote, in a fort of palisades near the sweep of its waters, an incomparable page of history, a page of the Golden Legend, simple, but at the same time sublime, proud, pure and inspiring!

In the soul of Thérèse, spurred by the fire of indignation, this page among so many other heroic pages, vibrates and flutters, beats and snaps like a flag! How can she, a French Canadian woman, see that page erased, violated, abolished by a British hand? A flash strikes deep into her eyes! She seizes the pen which has rolled near, over the paper; she dips it nervously to the bottom of the great silver inkstand, and with a firm hand, like the hand with which her ancestors drove the plough and held the sword, she wrote a few words slantingly across the middle of the unfinished page. Then taking away the tray, she went out making no sound.

Durham slept on.

Little by little, the candles burnt down, reached the bottom of the bronze holders, and died. Little by little, darkness took posses-

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sion of the room, blotting out the furniture, the books, the ornaments on the mantelpiece, the heraldic leopards, leaving only the rectangle on the floor where the moon was playing.

Durham slept on.

* * *

The cheerful cries of the swallows chasing each other in the morning light, awakened the noble lord. Surprised, it was some time before he became aware that he had slept for seven hours at his work-table. His papers had been a little scattered by the night breezes, and his pen was lying within reach of his hand on the last leaf. He put it back mechanically into the inkstand and his eyes, drawn naturally to the white page, read with amazement under the last words written in his own hand; "They are a people without a history" these others, written with a pen loaded with ink, in large heavy letters:

"THOU LIEST, DURHAM."

And this terrible postscript was signed,

"Madeleine de Verchères."

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The Governor passed his hand over his brow. He was not dreaming! Who had dared to do this? He walked towards the window, put the paper under the full light, and read again these dishonoring words: "Thou liest, Durham." The sun was rising beyond the cliffs of Point Levis. A white mist had settled on the water, drowning as yet the masts, the fine prows, the floating quays. Already, however, it was dissolving, separating, flying into fragments, and its dispersal proclaimed the coming triumph of the sun, of the light of the day.

"Madeleine de Verchères?" This name had never yet struck the ear of the Governor. Who was she? And then, perhaps, who was hiding under this name? The idea of seeking out the audacious intruder only for a moment crossed Durham's mind. As a man of spirit, too refined not to feel the ridiculous position, he had quite resolved not to tell of an adventure where the part of the hero was not his own. The unknown hand might be right, after all! History is perhaps something else than a long procession of centuries and crimes, a clashing of arms in an orgy of

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blood! The survival of this simple people, of this lily fallen from the white flag, of this child of France abandoned by its mother, the sound of that soft, sweet song which its life raises under this vast sky, do these not compose one of the finest cantos of the poem of humanity?

And the incomparable elegiac verses by Thomas Gray came back to his memory:

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear,
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air,”

And there at the bottom of his heart, below the anger which “Thou liest” had aroused, there was some admiration for the pride of the action which was lashing him. And in proportion as the horizon cleared, and as life resumed its song and its smile, the divine charm of the Laurentian land had its effect, and Lord Durham, leaning against the window, with the sheet still held in his hand, became appeased.

* * *

Three discreet knocks.

“Come in! Ah, it is you, Thérèse! I am

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pleased to see you. I have passed a poor night, and shall not go down this morning."

"Your Excellency has not slept?"

"Yes, but very badly. I neglected to take supper last night and suffered for it. I feel tired out."

"Your tea was ready, your Excellency. You had only to ring."

"Ah, Mademoiselle, you are French, are you not? I want to get some information from you."

"Very willingly, your Excellency, if I can give it."

"Is there anyone in this country who is named Madeleine de Verchères?"

The young girl paled a little, but did not flinch.

"The person of that name, your Excellency, has been dead for a century."

"Ah!"

"She lived a long time, but for us, she is always a little girl of fourteen, whom we call the heroine of Verchères."

"Really! Tell me her history, Mademoiselle, I am very fond of your legends of the old regime."

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Poor little Thérèse trembled a bit. Quite erect, and white as the cap worn on her black hair she nevertheless spoke up, and sketched for this stranger the marvellous picture where, on a background of forest and blue water, are portrayed the fierce visages of the Iroquois, the frightened faces of old men and children, but dominated by the silhouette of a little Canadian girl of fourteen, wearing a feathered felt hat, standing on the bastion, with a gun in her hands.

“It is now two hundred years ago, your Excellency, that heroism wrote this story on the shore of the Saint Lawrence. The daughter of Monsieur and Madame de Verchères lived with her parents in one of those primitive forts, simple palisades surrounding the church and the dwellings, which were then the advanced outposts of French civilization on this continent. It was the time when the Iroquois ranged everywhere, when every bush might hide a tiger with a human face, when every Colonist must be a soldier. In this rude school, hearts became like tempered steel, and souls unfolded and spread out like banners in the breeze.

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"Then on a day when Monsieur and Madame de Verchères were both away, the one at Montreal, and the other at Quebec, the war cry of the Iroquois rang out from the edge of the forest. In an instant twenty harvesters, surprised amongst their sheaves, are massacred and scalped. Madeleine is on the shore. Some one cries 'Save yourself!' Raising her head, she perceives the hideous tattooed faces a hundred paces away from her. Without losing her nerve, she turns and dashes into the fort, seeing the door open.

"And here, your Excellency, really commences that incredible exploit, as fine as an old-time fable! The fort is defenceless, all its garrison being worn-out old men, frantic women, crying children, and two soldiers half dead with fright, who talk of setting off the powder magazine. But Madeleine is of that magnificent blood which knows no fear! Instinctively she takes command of all this feeble crew. 'Remember,' she said to her two little brothers, to whom she had just given a gun, 'Remember that the sons of gentlemen are born to shed their blood for God and the King!' And immediately, your

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Excellency, this little girl of fourteen, wearing a feathered felt hat, appeared on the bastion."

"The adventure, indeed is not lacking in the picturesque! Please continue!"

"And Madeleine, with admirable decision and intelligence, organizes the garrison, giving to some their guns, to others sympathy, and to everyone courage. Everywhere at once, taking here and there a shot to fell an Iroquois more venturesome than the others, she succeeded in assuring the Indians that they were doing business with a strong party. Day and night, she is at her post and one cannot think without emotion of this sublime little girl, alone in this hidden corner of the New World, twenty miles from all human help, passing the night on the palisades to scan the horizon, her white hands resting on the breech of a large cannon ready to discharge, lending her ear to the nocturnal murmur of the forest, to the song of the wave, uplifting her pure soul to the Blessed Virgin, who had just saved Quebec, while yet her quiet courage cowed the Mohawk tigers, the white of whose eyes could almost be seen in the underwood." Even as she was speaking, Thérèse became more

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animated, her eyes shone with pride and her voice trembled with emotion. For Durham, it became more and more likely that this one could, if she wished, give him exact information as to his mysterious visitor of last night. Without letting this appear, he added:

“And what was the end of all that?”

“I have not finished, your Excellency, not having told you how Madeleine found the means of increasing her garrison. One morning at sunrise, a canoe appeared between the islands; it was making straight for the fort. The unlucky man who was paddling, his name Fontaine, was running into certain death. What do you think the bold child did?”

“How do I know,” said Durham, smiling, “I am no thunderbolt of war, not I! She let off a cannon to acquaint him of his danger?”

“Soldiers would have done that, perhaps. Madeleine did better. She had all the doors of the fort opened wide, and alone, without weapons, walked to the shore, received Fontaine and led him walking slowly into the midst of her people. The Indians, thinking it a strategem, did not dare to quit their shelter.

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"At last, after forty-eight hours spent without eating or sleeping, after having held out for eight days against nearly an army of Indians, Madeleine saw help appearing on the horizon! The Governor, apprised no one knows how, was sending M. de la Monnerie to rescue the fort. Madeleine, always capped like a musketeer, marched at once down to the beach, and as the Commandant jumped out on the sand she raised her cap, bowed, and said with that altogether French grace which goes so well with courage, 'Sir, please have the sentinels relieved, for eight days they have not been absent from the bastions. On that condition I give up my command to you, and hand over the Fort!'"

"In very truth, Mademoiselle, I believe I am hearing a song from the Iliad!"

"It is more than a song from the Iliad, your Excellency, it is a page from the History of Canada, of French Canada!"

Durham had now no longer any doubt. He knew beyond question that the little hand which was playing nervously with the fringe of her apron was indeed the same that had written "Thou liest, Durham!" But she was

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so brave, this little French Canadian, and so evidently sincere, that he wished her no ill, and above the nobleman who respected woman and her achievements, there was the gentleman who was willing to forgive.

Then, raising his fine patrician head, he added:

"I thank you, Mademoiselle, for the engaging story which you have just told me, and which is so affecting. I was unaware that this new country had as yet any annals so glorious. You have put so much warmth into it, that, truly, while listening to you, I was asking myself whether you were relating an incident, or—pleading a cause!"

At these words Durham rose. Thérèse took a step forward, and trembling,

"I was in fact pleading a cause, your Excellency, that of my people, that of the heroism of the French and their right to respect, to a place to live in, to survival, to liberty!"

Holding out to the young girl the paper which he had kept in his hand:

"Permit me, mademoiselle, to return this to you without asking for any explanation."

Then, with a smile,

LE PETIT MOUSSE NOIR

“I understand that the Verchères fort is always French, and in spite of the century elapsed, that the shade of little Madeleine sometimes comes back by night into the Chateau, to mount guard!”

Le Petit Mousse Noir



"Fare on, O ship, still onward pressing,
For happiness is near, is near !"

Le Petit Mousse Noir



UR le grand mât d'une corvette
Un petit mousse noir chantait
Disait d'une voix inquiète
Ces mots que la brise emportait,
Ah! qui me rendra le sourire
De ma mère m'ouvrant ses bras,
Filez, filez, Ô mon navire,
Car le bonheur m'attend là-bas.

Quand je partis, ma bonne mère
Me dit, "Tu vas sous d'autres cieux;
De nos savanes la chaumière
Va disparaître de tes yeux;
Pauvre enfant! si tu savais lire,
Je t'écritrais souvent, hélas!"
Filez, filez, O mon navire,
Car le bonheur m'attend là-bas.

On te dira dans le voyage
Que pour l'esclave est le mépris;
On te dira que ton visage
Est aussi sombre que les nuits;
Sans écouter, laissez-les dire,
Ton âme est blanche, eux n'en ont pas.
Filez, filez, O mon navire,
Car le bonheur m'attend là-bas.

LE PETIT MOUSSE NOIR

Ainsi chantait sur la misaine,
Le petit mousse de tribord;
Quand tout à coup le capitaine
Lui dit, en lui montrant le port;
"Va, mon enfant, loin du corsaire,
Sois libre, et fuis des coeurs ingrats,
Tu vas revoir ta pauvre mère,
Et le bonheur est dans ses bras."

This old French chanson, which is still in vogue in the Province of Quebec, is quoted in the story "Peuple Sans Histoire," and is one of a series done into English by James Ferres.



NEGRO boy aloft was singing,
Afloat upon the rolling seas,
In mournful strain his voice was
ringing,

Borne forward by the favoring breeze;
"When shall I feel the sweet caressing
Of thy fond arms, my mother dear,
"Spin on, O ship, on! onward pressing,
For now my happiness is near!

When I left home, my darling mother
Said, "Thou wilt roam 'neath foreign skies,
"Thy cottage home—thou know'st no other—
Will soon be blotted from thine eyes."

LE PETIT MOUSSE NOIR

And, day by day, she sends her blessing,
I would that I her words might hear,
Fare on, O ship, still onward pressing,
For happiness is near, is near!

"Thou wilt be told," she said, "when sailing,
That thou art slave, all vile and base,
"While cruel men, against thee railing,
Deride the blackness of thy face;
"But heed them not, those jibes distressing,
Thy soul is white, thy conscience clear."
Sail on, O ship, keep onward pressing,
My happiness is near, is near!

Lamenting thus, poor lad, behold him,
Aloft, and clinging to the mast;
But now the Captain's word is told him,
"Come down, thy troubles now are past,
"Thou 'rt free to leave this work distressing,
"This life of toil and wild alarms,
"Go now, and claim thy mother's blessing,
"Thy happiness is in her arms."

**"THE CHOPPING BEE, and Other
Laurentian Stories,"** as written by
Brother Marie-Victorin and translated
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The Chopping Bee *and other Laurentian Stories*

*Translated by James Ferres
from the French of M. Victorin*

M. VICTORIN is a compelling literary personality of French-Canada, whose work, presented in this complete English translation for the first time, must go down as among the most genuine and beautiful of our time. He has given us some of the most real and exquisite pictures of habitant life ever conceived. James Ferres, his translator, relates the following interesting co-incidence in connection with his work. It has to do with the Second Literary Competition conducted by the Société St. Jean Baptiste de Montreal. Its purport is as follows: One of the Judges handed his two colleagues the prize list. They looked at each other in surprise. Without knowing it, without having conferred, or even seen each other, they had named exactly the same award. One of them, however, had placed in the same rank with the winner another entry. If the one was remarkable for the brilliancy of its descriptions, the other was equally so for the emotional appeal of the story. On investigation, it was found that both essays were by the same author, M. Victorin. These prize stories were "The Chopping Bee" and "The Cordwood Donation Bee" which are comprised in this volume.

To James Ferres must be accorded signal appreciation. It is entirely due to his zeal and his sympathetic pen that the stories of Victorin have been brought before the English-speaking world. They are a discovery of new beauty which will be welcomed everywhere for their moving simplicity and fresh philosophy.

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